

# Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

REVERSING THE GREAT REVERSAL: RENEWING URBAN CHURCH PLANTING  
IN THE WESLEYAN-HOLINESS TRADITION

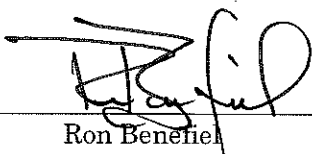
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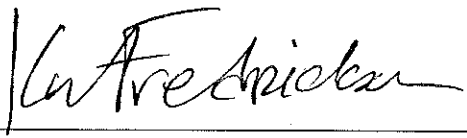
Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary  
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REVERSING THE GREAT REVERSAL: RENEWING URBAN CHURCH  
PLANTING IN THE WESLEYAN-HOLINESS TRADITION

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

DAVID A. BUSIC  
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## ABSTRACT

### **Reversing the Great Reversal: Renewing Urban Church Planting in the Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition**

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The purpose of this doctoral project is to develop new ways of thinking about missional strategies for church planting in the urban context. It considers how a robust missional theology, rooted in the best of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, can take shape in a rapidly growing urban context. Additionally, it examines how these theological practices can nourish and promote a vibrant church planting movement for the Church of the Nazarene.

Part One examines the urban history of the Church of the Nazarene, with a particular focus on the missional strategies of first generation Nazarene leaders. There are sociological and ecclesial reasons why the second generation of Nazarene leaders began to disengage from the great urban areas. These include the influence of the evangelical mainstream's move away from cities known as the "Great Reversal." This regression removed the Church of the Nazarene from elemental facets of Wesleyan-Holiness theology, especially pertaining to the spiritual formation of Christlike disciples and efficacy of the means of grace.

Part Two defines particular aspects of Wesleyan-Holiness theology that contribute to the shaping of a Nazarene urban ecclesiology, concentrating on the importance of small groups, the means of grace, and compassion in the formation of Christian character. A biblical philosophy of Christian community is explored as a paradigm for urban churches.

Part Three summarizes the vision, strategy, and goals for urban church planting in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. The strategy reviews three current models of Nazarene work in urban areas: renewal of established churches, immigrant churches, and compassionate ministries-based churches. With the practical implications of Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology as a guide, this project proposes a fourth developmental parish model evident in emerging expressions of Nazarene urban congregations. This parish church model presents transferrable methods and processes for diverse urban contexts.

Content Reader: Ron Benefiel, Ph.D.

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To my son, Ben, who always showed an interest in this project and who served as my undesignated, but immensely encouraging, accountability partner to help see it through to completion

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## PART ONE

### MINISTRY CONTEXT



## INTRODUCTION

“It had been my long-cherished desire to have a place in the heart of the city, which could be a center of holy fire, and where the gospel could be preached to the poor.” Phineas Bresee<sup>1</sup>

The Church of the Nazarene is an evangelical Christian denomination in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. It is the largest holiness denomination in the world with a current membership of 2.47 million members and 30,000 churches in 162 world areas.<sup>2</sup> The mission statement for the Church of the Nazarene is “to make Christlike disciples in the nations.”<sup>3</sup> This mission is sustained by three core values: “We are Christian; we are holiness; we are missional.”<sup>4</sup> The Church of the Nazarene currently supports fifty-three undergraduate educational institutions in thirty-five countries on six continents with an enrollment of more than 50,000 students. Additionally, the denomination sponsors hospitals, health clinics, and compassionate ministry centers around the world.

The Church of the Nazarene originated in 1895 in Los Angeles, California, under the leadership of Phineas F. Bresee, who is widely considered to be the church’s founder. He left a prominent position in the Methodist Episcopal Church to work with the poor

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<sup>1</sup> Floyd Cunningham, ed., Stan Ingersol, Harold E. Raser, and David P. Whitelaw, *Our Watchword and Song: The Centennial History of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2013), 96.

<sup>2</sup> The General Secretary’s office for the Church of the Nazarene reports a global membership of 2,471,553 as of June, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> The Church of the Nazarene Archives reports that the core values were adopted in 2001.

<sup>4</sup> The Church of the Nazarene Archives reports that the mission statement was adopted in 2007.

and addicted on Skid Row in the inner city of Los Angeles.<sup>5</sup> One of his journal entries read, “It had been my long-cherished desire to have a place in the heart of the city, which could be made a center of holy fire, and where the gospel could be preached to the poor.”<sup>6</sup>

After an all-night session of prayer by both lay and clergy founding leaders, a layperson named J.P. Widney (second president of the University of Southern California) suggested the name, “Church of the Nazarene.” It would be a witness that the fledgling church would be identified with that aspect of Jesus’ ministry devoted to those who were underserved and who had been pushed to the margins—and so the church received its name.<sup>7</sup> The minutes of the organizational meeting for the First Church of the Nazarene of Los Angeles, California, dated October 20, 1895, state the following:

Feeling clearly called of God to the carrying on of His work in the conversion of sinners, the sanctification of believers and the building up in holiness of those who may be committed to our care we associate ourselves together as a Church of God under the name of the Church of the Nazarene. We seek the simplicity and power of the primitive New Testament church. The field of labor to which we feel called is in the neglected quarters of the cities and wherever else may be found waste places and souls seeking pardon and cleansing from sin. This work we aim to do through the agency of city missions, evangelistic services, house to house visitation, caring for the poor, comforting the dying. To this end, we strive personally to walk with God and to invite others so to do.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> David A. Basic, “In the Heart of the City,” *Board of General Superintendent’s Leadership Newsletter*, September 2015, <https://asiapacificnazarene.org/in-the-heart-of-the-city/> (accessed February 28, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 96.

<sup>7</sup> Harold E. Raser, “Beating Back the Amnesia: Love for Neighbors in the Church of the Nazarene, 1975-1998,” 1998 Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Conference, *Didache: Faithful Teaching*, <http://didache.nazarene.org/index.php/regiontheoconf/ncm-1998/739-ncm1998-5-raser/file> (accessed February 28, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 100.

With this statement, Bresee and the other Nazarenes who joined him on this quest launched an urban movement. The commitment of the Church of the Nazarene to the cities brought a resurgence of interest in the masses by many other groups and churches, and was a viable motivation through the early years of the new denomination. It was both theologically and socially motivated. However, as time went by, the church growth concept of “redemption and lift”<sup>9</sup> brought about a developing tendency for city churches to relocate to the suburbs where their members were moving.

Paul Benefiel, a former district superintendent of the Los Angeles District Church of the Nazarene and a sociologist by training, suggested the Church of the Nazarene may have been moving away from Bresee’s original purpose as early as 1901.<sup>10</sup> This is supported by a statement Bresee wrote in the *Nazarene Messenger* dated December 31, 1901: “The evidence of the presence of Jesus in our midst is that we bear the gospel, particularly to the poor. This must be genuine; it is more than sentiment; it cannot be simulated nor successfully imitated.”<sup>11</sup>

Two months earlier, in October of 1901, Bresee wrote, “The first miracle after the baptism with the Holy Ghost was wrought upon a beggar. It means that the first service of a Holy Ghost-baptized church is to the poor; its ministry is to those who need them the

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<sup>9</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 295-313. McGavran coined the phrase “redemption and lift” to describe the power of the gospel to transform every person, particularly their socioeconomic state.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Benefiel, “Nazarenes in the City: The Strategy for Los Angeles.” Paper presented to the Association of Nazarene Social Researchers Conference, 1986. ANSR Collection, Nazarene Archives, Lenexa, KS.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Harold Ivan Smith, *The Quotable Bresee* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1983), 167-168.

most. As the Spirit was upon Jesus to preach the gospel to the poor, so His Spirit is upon His servants for the same purpose.”<sup>12</sup> Again, Paul Benefiel affirms, “Although the founding fathers of the Church of the Nazarene saw that their primary ministry was to the poor and to the cities, it is also apparent that the churches of this denomination were generally moving away from the poor and out of the cities. Most churches were not able to cope with the turmoil, the tension, and the frustrations of the inner city.”<sup>13</sup> Both internal and external forces changed the original trajectory of emphasis on the urban poor and the welfare of cities.

In addition to these early beginnings, another vision was emerging, according to Timothy L. Smith, an historian from Johns Hopkins University who wrote the preeminent history of the Church of the Nazarene. Masterfully weaving the denominational story, Smith maintained that the early years of the Church of the Nazarene were forged out of compromise between two similar, but slightly different, visions of the Christian life. The resulting outcome alternated between a creative tension or a source of conflict. In Smith’s words, “Neither the origin nor the subsequent history of the Church of the Nazarene can be understood without a knowledge of the two holiness traditions, *urban* and *rural*.”<sup>14</sup>

The distinguishing characteristics that Smith saw in the urban-holiness leavening of the church, primarily from the northern influence, included an educational inclination with an understanding and empathy for original Wesleyanism, as found in the theological

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Benefiel, “Nazarenes in the City.”

<sup>14</sup> Timothy L. Smith, *Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes: The Formative Years* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962), 27, emphasis added.

teachings and social reforms of John Wesley. The northern centers of ecclesiastical strength were primarily in cities or closely outlying suburbs. By contrast, the southern group of Nazarenes, who united with the church shortly thereafter, was predominantly rural and took a rigorous stand against formality and worldliness. Their propensity was more focused on aggressive evangelism, the personal crisis of entire sanctification in a believer's life, and a strong influence of the camp meeting ethos from the nineteenth-century holiness movement.

This tenuous union between the urban and rural holiness traditions was considered a miracle by many and, as Smith observes, a key to understanding Nazarene DNA. However, it has continued to be a persistent tension through the years within the structure, polity, and strategy of the denomination. While the emphases from both northern and southern Nazarenes were not amiss, the polarity shift had a profound impact on the urban movement of the Church of the Nazarene. By the second generation of Nazarenes, the missional focus had shifted almost exclusively to suburban and rural areas.

The Church of the Nazarene has greatly evolved from those early days, but the divergent paths in the denomination's beginnings remain. A new path can be forged for an urban-minded church to coexist with a revivalistic, church-growth minded church. A rural-minded church can reorient itself to reach the great urban centers of the world. If the Church of the Nazarene was formed by the merging of two distinct holiness traditions,

urban and rural, the Lord of the Church can help disparate traditions rediscover a healthy tension going forward.<sup>15</sup>

The purpose of this doctoral project is to develop new ways of thinking about missional strategies for church planting in the urban context. It will consider how a robust missional theology, rooted in the best of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, can take shape in a rapidly growing urban context. Additionally, it will examine how these theological practices can nourish and promote a vibrant church planting movement for the Church of the Nazarene.<sup>16</sup>

Part One will examine the urban history of the Church of the Nazarene, with a particular focus on the missional thinking and strategies of first generation Nazarene leaders. There are sociological and ecclesial reasons why the second generation of Nazarene leaders began to disengage from the great urban areas. These included the influence of the evangelical mainstream's move away from cities known as "the Great Reversal."<sup>17</sup> This pivotal regression removed the Church of the Nazarene from elemental facets of Wesleyan-Holiness theology, especially those pertaining to the spiritual formation of Christlike disciples and efficacy of the means of grace. Part Two will define

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<sup>15</sup> These disparate traditions are more than geographical. They also include important issues of class, educational, cultural, and racial differences that require thorough parsing.

<sup>16</sup> Wesleyan-Holiness is distinguished from Keswick holiness or Oberlin holiness or Pentecostal holiness. While the hyphen in the title is optional, Wesleyan always needs to be a modifier of holiness in order to differentiate which of the four streams of the American Holiness Movement one is referencing.

<sup>17</sup> The term, "the Great Reversal," was coined by Nazarene scholar, Timothy L. Smith. It became popularized by David O. Moberg, in his classic work, *The Great Reversal: Reconciling Evangelism and Social Concern*. In his preface to the first edition, Moberg states: "I first heard Professor Timothy L. Smith's expression, 'the Great Reversal,' approximately a decade ago when he gave a lecture on revivalism and social reform at Bethel College and Seminary." David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Reconciling Evangelism and Social Concern* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 11.

particular aspects of Wesleyan-Holiness theology that contribute to the shaping of a Nazarene urban ecclesiology, concentrating on the importance of small groups, the means of grace, and compassion in the formation of Christian character. A biblical philosophy of Christian community will be explored as a practical paradigm for urban ministry and city churches. Part Three will summarize the vision, strategy, and goals for urban church planting in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. The strategy will review three current models of Nazarene work in urban areas: renewal of established churches, immigrant churches, and compassionate ministries-based churches. With the practical implications of Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology as a guide, it will propose a fourth developmental parish model evident in emerging expressions of Nazarene urban congregations. This parish church model will present denominational competencies and offer transferrable methods and processes for diverse urban contexts.

“The World Health Organization projects that by 2030, six out of ten people will live in a city, and by 2050 this proportion will increase to seven out of ten people. These projections almost double the global urban population to 6.4 billion people.”<sup>18</sup> Leigh Gallagher reports that according to census data, the largest American cities “grew at a faster rate than the suburbs for the first time in almost one hundred years.”<sup>19</sup> As the Church of the Nazarene has become more affluent and improved socioeconomically in the past few decades, it has been effective in reaching suburban and rural areas. While the lines of urban/suburban are blurring in some locales, ministry to city cores has not fared

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<sup>18</sup> Busic, “In the Heart of the City.”

<sup>19</sup> Leigh Gallagher, *The End of the Suburbs: Where the American Dream is Moving* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin Publishing, 2013), 14

well. This is a troubling reality, especially in light of the recent predictions of urban growth that do not bode well for the future mission of the Church of the Nazarene if current trends are not reversed. The purpose of this project will be to consider ways to reverse the Great Reversal while remaining faithful to Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology.

“Cities are centers of cultural diversity. Cities drive regional and global economies.”<sup>20</sup> Cities are the educational, artistic, and technological shapers of society. If globalization means “that one nation’s cultural values and paradigms now have the capacity to infiltrate and affect the entire global community,”<sup>21</sup> then cities are the milieu. But cities remain a challenge for many churches because they are often expensive, complex, and secularized. For these and other reasons, the majority of the world’s great cities are vastly under-churched today.

The most significant Nazarene works that remain in the urban context have focused primarily on compassionate ministry centers and ethnic congregations. While these continue to be important areas of concentration for those in the Wesleyan-Holiness tribe, other important methodological approaches are needed to address the intricacies of city centers. The urban world has become more than those who live within the city limits—it is an environment in which we all live regardless of one’s address.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Busic, “In the Heart of the City.”

<sup>21</sup> Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 126.

<sup>22</sup> Busic, “In the Heart of the City.”



## CHAPTER 1

### THE URBAN BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

“Neither the origin nor the subsequent history of the Church of the Nazarene can be understood without a knowledge of the two holiness traditions, urban and rural... To balance them one against the other has been the task of Nazarene churchmanship ever since the union at Pilot Point in 1908.”<sup>1</sup> Timothy L. Smith

The Church of the Nazarene was born as a progeny of the Wesleyan Revival of the eighteenth century and the American Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century. From these various streams of holiness teaching and practice, perfect love and human suffering were inextricably linked together. Holiness was both the motivation for compassion and the remedy for human misery. Thus, holiness-minded people were inexorably drawn to the urban poor. Dissatisfied with internal dissensions, overly controlling ecclesiastical hierarchies, and controversies over doctrinal differences, holiness leaders and laities turned their focus and energy to those they deemed neglected at best and forgotten at worst. Setting aside ecclesial boundaries, urban congregations from multiple theological backgrounds labored together to “precipitate a national Pentecost which they hoped would baptize America in the Holy Spirit and in some mystic

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Called Unto Holiness*, 28.

manner destroy the evils of slavery, poverty, and greed.”<sup>2</sup> Driven by postmillennial eschatology, utopian dreams for a Christian century and a national vision for “Christianizing Christianity” seemed within the grasp of holiness churches.<sup>3</sup>

### **Phineas Bresee and the First Nazarenes**

These parallel streams of holiness-minded churches converged in the late nineteenth century to form the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness. The intermingling of Wesleyan-Arminian theology, Methodist polity, and evangelical revivalism from a variety of denominational traditions made for a curious concoction of camp meeting-styled Wesleyanism. As a result of this unusual blend, just twenty years before the Church of the Nazarene was consummated, several distinct groups were being formed. Timothy Smith comments on these dissimilar groups’ composition, “One, largely rural, was more emotionally demonstrative, emphasized rigid standards of dress and behavior, and often scorned ecclesiastical discipline. The other was urban, intellectual, and somewhat less zealous about outward standards of holiness.”<sup>4</sup> Smith’s observation cannot be understated. When the founders of the Church of the Nazarene merged three separate denominations into one, they originated from different geographical regions of the country: The Association of Pentecostal Churches of America

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1957), 62.

<sup>3</sup> Harold E. Raser, “‘Christianizing Christianity’: The Holiness Movement As a Church, *the* Church, or No Church at All,” Church of the Nazarene, <https://www.usacanadaregion.org/sites/usacanadaregion.org/files/Roots/Resources/Christianizing%20Christianity%20by%20Harold%20Raser.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2018), emphasis in original.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Called Unto Holiness*, 435.

from the east, the Holiness Church of Christ from the south and southwest, and the Church of the Nazarene from the west.<sup>5</sup> While each denomination shared common interests in the sanctified life and holiness evangelism, their other emphases were remarkably varied. “The East Coast Nazarenes worked among immigrant groups, most notably Cape Verdeans. West Coast Nazarenes reached out to inner city poor, the Japanese immigrants in the orange groves, indigenous and immigrant Mexicans, and Chinese-Americans.”<sup>6</sup> One emphasized the sacraments and education. Another emphasized enthusiastic worship and the avoidance of worldliness. Still another emphasized social work and a desire to build a center of holy fire which would evangelize the cities of the nation.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, the early Nazarenes were attempting to weave together three separate ideological perspectives.

Because these early differences were emphatically evident, Nazarene historians document modifications of missional focus that have taken place through generational shifts over the past one hundred years, particularly in relation to social change.

The first generation, those who had doggedly defended holiness during the late nineteenth century, considered Christ, to use H. Richard Niebuhr’s classification, as the Transformer of culture. *The first generation’s orientation was urban*. The chief early centers of the church that became Nazarene were in such cities as Brooklyn, Los Angeles, Nashville, and Glasgow. The leaders—including Bresee, Reynolds, A.M. Hills, B.F. Haynes, John T. Benson, and George Sharpe—had come out of established denominations<sup>8</sup> and possessed a sense of custodianship

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<sup>5</sup> Stan Ingersol, *Past and Prospect: The Promise of Nazarene History* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 21.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Called Unto Holiness*, 52.

<sup>8</sup> Bresee – Methodist Episcopal Church; Reynolds – Methodist Episcopal Church; Haynes – Methodist Episcopal Church, South; Benson – Methodist Episcopal Church, South; Sharpe – Methodist Episcopal Church, Congregationalist.

for culture. Their concerns for society were deep. They built rescue missions and homes for unwed mothers and pushed forward the temperance movement.<sup>9</sup> The second generation of Nazarenes, by contrast, was rural in orientation.<sup>10</sup> Prominent leaders during this period, such as R.T. Williams and J.B. Chapman, had an early connection with Bresee, but were raised in ecclesiastical settings that were defined by the rural ethos of revivalism and camp meetings.<sup>11</sup> Their perspective fit Niebuhr's classification of Christ against culture, promoting a wave of Nazarenes to withdraw from mainstream culture.<sup>12</sup>

Following the path of many in post-World War II America, the third generation of Nazarenes began to move into newly created suburbs on the outskirts of declining central city cores.<sup>13</sup> Although more will be said about the impact of the rise of suburbia on the Church of the Nazarene's engagement with urban areas, an underlying inspiration for suburbs grew out of Victorian "ideals of domestic purity,"<sup>14</sup> and as an escape from the moral entrapments of the moribund urban life. Nazarene historians have identified this era in the Church of the Nazarene as Niebuhr's classification of Christ of culture.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 10-11, emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 11. Mainline churches were located primarily in urban areas.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>14</sup> Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 69-70.

<sup>15</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 12.

Articulating Nazarene history through the lens of Niebuhr's classifications of how ecclesiastical bodies deal with culture change is helpful to understanding the denomination because it stresses the missional accent of either centripetal or centrifugal flow in each generation. Christ transforming culture model, the primary worldview of first generation Nazarenes, emphasizes hands-on action to reform society and human flourishing. Christ against culture model, the primary worldview of second generation Nazarenes, sees culture more negatively and tends to emphasize withdrawal from society, even to the point of creating counter-cultural enclaves. Christ of culture model, the primary worldview of third generation Nazarenes, attempts to hold the two previous approaches in balance, and yet begins to move toward accommodation to civil religion. While Niebuhr did not categorize any group exclusively into one model, the distinctions are telling. Worldview determines vision; vision determines mission; mission determines strategy.

The move from the Christ transforming model to the Christ against culture model represented a major shift in focus. Early Nazarenes centered their holiness evangelism and compassionate ministries in urban areas such as Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Nashville. The earliest international missionary work in India and Japan centered on cities such as Calcutta and Tokyo. Conversely, the second generation of leaders had southern roots and was more aligned with revivalistic techniques, such as transportable tents with sawdust floors in small rural towns. While the differences were not matters of right or wrong, the difference in missional strategy was dramatic. In this period "the

church shifted attention from Tokyo to Kyoto, from Calcutta to Buldana, and in America, from the cities to the Midwestern farm belt.”<sup>16</sup>

This was a significant departure from the vision of the early Nazarenes, particularly those from the northeast and west. At the dawn of the twentieth century cities were growing rapidly, bringing with them the associated aspects of compact urban environments: overcrowding, unemployment, pollution, poverty, corruption, and crime.<sup>17</sup> While many urban congregations were escaping the cities, the holiness associations saw these raw urban conditions as an open door to reach desperate, broken, and in many cases, spiritually open people with the gospel.

Bresee believed that the conditions were ripe for perfect love and Christlike ministry to the lowest levels of society. His disappointment with the Methodist Episcopal communion, for what he believed was a disregard for the poor and disenfranchised, prompted him to do the unthinkable—request a relocation away from a prestigious assignment to work with a rescue mission in downtown Los Angeles. There would be no return for Bresee. Even though his initial foray into the complexities and injustices of the city proved to be difficult, Bresee had tapped into his God-given passion and divine calling—a missional commitment of holiness evangelism to the toiling masses of the world.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>17</sup> “Rise of Industrial America, 1876-1900: City Life in the Late Nineteenth Century,” Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/riseind/> (accessed February 22, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, Kindle Location 1970. The early Nazarenes were purposeful in their use of the word ‘toiling.’ They identified it as a descriptive symbol of Jesus’ ministry to

He did not set out to begin a church, but when Bresee and his followers officially organized themselves on October 20, 1895, they knew their providential purpose. “They professed a definite sense of divine calling. They intended to be a church, not a mission or association. They were committed to the doctrine of entire sanctification as a second definite work of divine grace. And, finally, they believed they had a special mission to the urban poor.”<sup>19</sup> They would call themselves the Church of the Nazarene, associated by name and affiliation with the ministry of Jesus to the outcast, marginalized, forgotten, and displaced people of the world. Bresee and those first Nazarenes were convinced that the “special calling of the Church of the Nazarene was first to plant ‘centers of holy flame’ *in the great cities of America*.”<sup>20</sup> Centers of holy flame denoted a calling especially to “the neglected quarters of the city and wherever else may be found waste places and souls seeking pardon and cleansing from sin.”<sup>21</sup>

### **The Great Reversal and the Church of the Nazarene**

In spite of the specific urban calling so evident in its earliest days, the Church of the Nazarene, on the whole, did not remain in the cities of America. The factors that led the Church of the Nazarene to depart from a distinctive earlier commitment to social ministries in the urban context are related, but not the same. These factors can be addressed by a sociological movement called the Great Reversal. This term, first coined

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the poor and distressed of the world. “The toiling lowly mission of Christ and [thus] the toiling mission of Christ’s followers.”

<sup>19</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 100.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 107, emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 100.

by Timothy Smith, refers to the radical shift evangelicals made in the early twentieth century from an evangelistic social concern to an altered focus on individualistic evangelism and fundamentalist theology.<sup>22</sup> The earlier evangelistic social concern was interested in personal evangelism, but held that personal transformation accompanied social transformation. This strongly-held conviction led to the establishment of orphanages, homes for unwed mothers, city rescue missions, schools for immigrants, and the Church working together as one to support legislation to bring about social change. However, with the Great Reversal came a significant modification—the social gospel became linked with liberal theology.

Smith's *Revivalism and Social Reform* was one of the “single most explosive theses in the history of the American Society of Church History.”<sup>23</sup> It was disruptive “because in 1958 it was still a foregone conclusion that if any evangelical talked about the kingdom, he was a liberal, a modernist who didn't believe in the Bible, and had been taken in by German higher criticism.”<sup>24</sup> This mindset dominated the American evangelical mind so completely that a dichotomy was formed between two types of Christianity: one that saved souls for heaven and the other that worked to change societal structures on earth.

In his seminal book on the Great Reversal, David Moberg argued that with the modernist-fundamentalist debate, great revivalist preachers became soul winners,

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<sup>22</sup> Moberg, *The Great Reversal*, 11, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Ralph D. Winter, “Understanding the Polarization between Fundamentalist and Modernist Mission,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 26 (Spring 2009): 6.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



preaching that true social reform must begin with the individual, not with society.<sup>25</sup> As the liberal wing of the church dropped the responsibility of preaching the gospel, the evangelical wing felt a greater pressure to fill in the gap. Further, when individualism continued to emerge as a driving ethos in American thinking, it was easier to associate being Christian with being American. Conservative politics became enmeshed with conservative religion. Rather than poverty being a systemic problem that must be fixed, the goals of prosperity and success grew to be the inalienable right of every person.

Soong-Chan Rah notes, “There was a time when evangelicals had a balanced position that gave proper attention to both evangelism and social concern, but a great reversal early in this [twentieth] century led to a lopsided emphasis upon evangelism and omission of most aspects of social involvement.”<sup>26</sup> Moberg’s and Smith’s work reiterated that there can be no social gospel without evangelism, because welfare does not eliminate personal and spiritual emptiness. Likewise, personal evangelism that does not also address unjust and discriminating social systems fails to deal with the systemic sins of society. Evangelism and social concern go hand in hand. This is true to Christian faith generally, and Wesleyan roots specifically.

These cultural tensions were strongly felt among Nazarenes. As the modernist-fundamentalist controversy raged, conservative Christians, including many Methodists, felt disenfranchised from what they perceived as the liberalization of their mainline denominations. A number of these migrated to the Church of the Nazarene, bringing with

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<sup>25</sup> Moberg, *The Great Reversal*, 11, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 96.

them more reformed theological positions and fundamentalist leanings. Fear became a primary reason to disassociate from a rapidly changing culture. There were perceived and real cultural dangers to confront: Communism, Darwinism, modernism, and atheism, to name a few. They felt as if the secure world they had known was disintegrating before their eyes. Even the authority and veracity of the Bible was being challenged in educational institutions with newfangled ideologies like higher criticism. Cities were perceived as strong magnets for these threats to the life of faith.

Accompanying this fear were other aspects of fundamentalist theology, including a changing eschatology. Premillennialism replaced postmillennialism theology. The majority of early Nazarene leaders were postmillennialist in their thinking. This more optimistic view of the Parousia, the Christian belief in the second coming of Christ, believed that the in-breaking kingdom of God would make the world a better place, and added a sense of urgency to work for societal change to prepare the way for the return of Christ. Alternatively, premillennialist thought maintained that society would continue to deteriorate, and only when it had reached its lowest point would Christ return. For premillennialists, cities represented everything that was wrong with the world. The vice, sins, and darkness of cities appeared complex and dangerous. Urban centers were perceived as politically liberal, theologically adrift, and wildly perilous.

These rural Methodists felt alienated from suburban culture ... Their piety and pessimism outweighed social concern. Fear colored the whole sphere of sociological change. Many holiness people, like other Americans, became caught up in the view that there was some plot working against the basic premises and morals of Christianity.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 185.

Conversely, the countryside felt conservative and safe. In response to these real and perceived threats to the moral fabric of their country,<sup>28</sup> Nazarenes felt obligated to make a choice. Ingersol observes that American Protestantism had been effectively polarized into two different camps.<sup>29</sup> Denominations were asked to cast their vote, if not their lot. In the perilous environment of the cultural hurricane, it was deemed an easy choice. In 1928, at the Seventh General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene, General Superintendent R.T. Williams spoke clearly and adamantly, “First, we note with pleasure that there are no differences or divisions among us. We are a perfectly united denomination. In this General Assembly, there will be no discussions of modernism or fundamentalism. We are all fundamentalists. . . . Every man in this body is a fundamentalist. . . . A modernist would be very lonesome in this General Assembly.”<sup>30</sup>

While Williams undoubtedly believed the fundamentals to be the authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, and the unchanging character of God, the die had been cast. An intentional, or perhaps unintentional, choice had been made. This set into motion what Nazarene historian Paul Bassett characterized as “the fundamental leavening of the holiness movement.”<sup>31</sup> The unintended consequences of this decision created a new denominational agenda. The theological conversation for Nazarenes was changed.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The majority of Nazarenes in the 1920s and 1930s lived in the United States.

<sup>29</sup> Ingersol, *Past and Prospect*, 12. Ingersol refers to the introduction of a “two party system” in American Protestantism.

<sup>30</sup> Taken from the “Address of the General Superintendents,” *Seventh General Assembly Journal* (1928), as quoted in Paul M. Bassett, “The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement, 1914-1940, The Church of the Nazarene: A Case Study,” *Wesleyan Theological Society Journal* (1978): 75-76.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ingersol, *Past and Prospect*, 12.

The first leaders were gone and with them an ongoing concern for the plight of the urban poor. National morality was flagging and the fear of losing holiness children was fierce. Accommodation felt like compromise. “Such a situation inevitably deepened the isolation among Nazarenes and taught them to despair of ever making the cities of America a garden of the Lord.”<sup>33</sup> It was time to separate from worldly ways and ungodly influences. The separation was complete and the cities of America were left behind.

If the Church of the Nazarene left the cities largely due to a fear of what cities represented and in reaction to the social gospel’s deficient emphasis on evangelism, there was also the increasing influence of southern church leadership. In his historical overview of the evangelical church in the American city, Harvie Conn observes that because urbanization came much later in the south, its primary impact leaned more toward a rural and frontier mindset.<sup>34</sup> While the religious institutions in the south greatly influenced cultural ideas and mores, “unlike the north, southern revivalism had little impact on social reform.”<sup>35</sup> Due to the prevalence of slavery in the south, morality was restricted to more privatized areas of rural middle-class virtues such as “self-restraint, self-discipline, and the encouragement of familial and neighborly responsibilities.”<sup>36</sup> This reality was deeply felt in the Church of the Nazarene.

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<sup>33</sup> Smith, *Called Unto Holiness*, 29.

<sup>34</sup> Harvie M. Conn, *The American City and the Evangelical Church: A Historical Overview* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 39.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Moreover, when the first generation of Nazarene leaders faded from the scene, the second generation of leaders had different passions. R.T. Williams and J.B. Chapman, the last two general superintendents with direct ties to Bresee and Pilot Point, were from the southern wing of the church. Prior to becoming a general superintendent, Chapman was editor of the denominational periodical, *Herald of Holiness*. Believing the modernist-fundamentalist controversy was important to the integrity of the Church of the Nazarene, and in an effort to extend an inviting hand to distressed fundamentalists searching for a new ecclesiastical home, Chapman revealed his bias in a 1924 editorial: “Unity was impossible between men who believed ‘in . . . a program of social and educational services . . . and a world-wide program of Pentecostal evangelism.’ Liberals might tolerate fundamentalists, but the latter could *never ‘cater to the doctrines and efforts of the social reformer.’*”<sup>37</sup>

Another popular Nazarene leader, Reuben Robinson, emerged during this time and was affectionately called, “Uncle Buddie.”<sup>38</sup> Born in a log cabin in the Smoky Mountains, Robinson eventually moved to Texas to be a sharecropper and ranch hand. He was radically saved during a sawdust camp meeting and, despite his lack of education and physical challenges, Robinson became one of the most sought after and effective evangelists in the history of the Church of the Nazarene. Williams, Chapman, and Robinson were widely respected and carried inestimable clout within the denomination, but their orientation was more agrarian and rural than cosmopolitan and urban.

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<sup>37</sup> James Blaine Chapman, *Herald of Holiness* (November 5, 1924), as quoted in Smith, *Called Unto Holiness*, 319, emphases added.

<sup>38</sup> James Blaine Chapman, *Bud Robinson: A Brother Beloved* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1943), 176.

Another denominational shift occurred after World War II. With a burgeoning economy and the introduction of a commuter lifestyle, many Nazarenes moved away from urban areas to expanding suburbs, further removing them from urban culture, particularly regular interaction with the marginalized of society. With this detachment came the formalizing of compassionate ministries as a programmatic arm of the church.

The fourth generation [of Nazarenes] witnessed a rapid expansion of the church on its international frontiers. By the end of this era, the Church of the Nazarene was larger outside North America than within it ... *The era saw an emphasis upon compassionate ministries.* Nazarenes held Christ and culture in paradox, at home equally in the church and the world and not always recognizing or solving the tensions this involved. . . . During the fourth generation, the Nazarene parish indeed became the world.<sup>39</sup>

Compassionate ministries looked less and less like ministry to the urban poor in America and more like hospitals and schools in Africa, India, China, and Papua New Guinea. It could be argued that this was merely the evolution of compassion, but something had changed. When the Church of the Nazarene broadened its horizons to a world parish, it became easier to neglect one's neighborhood parish.

During the 1948 General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene, General Superintendent H.V. Miller encouraged the young denomination to focus district church planting strategies in rural areas.

In the formative years of our denominational existence, we have wisely tried to establish our work in centers of population. The time has now come when we should face the challenge of necessity of planning for the rural areas as well. . . . We should deliberately plan as districts to evangelize the rural areas as opportunity affords. Are we fully aware that fifty per cent of our population is rural? . . . It is quite likely that some legislation will be necessary to encourage districts to set up circuits where such will meet the needs of a given area.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 11-12, emphasis added.

General Assembly legislation was passed, formally setting into motion what was already the trajectory of the denomination. The Church of the Nazarene would, by parliamentary fiat, become a rural and suburban church. It would seem a logical step, based on the waning interest in urban areas, but it would turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy for the denomination.

The sociological and generational survey of the Church of the Nazarene explains the ebb and flow of urban ministry over the past century. However, the movement from urban to rural then suburbia to world is not only reflective of contextual processes and leadership interests in each generation, but of the shifting tides of evangelicalism more broadly. The Church of the Nazarene has largely been swept along with the mainstream of sociological adaptation over the decades, beginning in the United States and broadening to the international stage.

Societal changes greatly influenced the evangelical urban strategy with demographics being a major factor. Research indicates that Protestants began leaving urban areas as early as 1850 with many congregations changing property locations every few decades.<sup>41</sup> Government programs that made home purchases more accessible and facilitated the development of municipal infrastructure encouraged the movement of people away from urban centers. Moreover, as denominations began to move away from the cities their churches began to reach a different kind of socioeconomic member, less

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<sup>40</sup> H.V. Miller, "General Superintendents' Quadrennial Address," General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene, 1948.

<sup>41</sup> Gibson Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches: An Analysis of Protestant Responsibility in the Expanding Metropolis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1961), 42.

blue-collar and more middle-class. This upwardly mobile trajectory and the relocation of congregations to more suburban areas had a two-fold effect: (1) moving closer to primarily white middle-class members and suburban culture, (2) moving away from primarily non-white lower class members who could not afford to relocate.

When people lived together in the cities, the poor were neighbors with the rich. They shopped in the same stores and their children went to the same schools. Once whites moved to the suburbs, it became easier to stigmatize those who were left in the inner cities.<sup>42</sup> Gibson Winter observes, “These were almost inevitable movements for religious institutions whose principle of organization is the voluntary congregation; such churches move when the important members leave the area.”<sup>43</sup> Whether it was intended or not, these relocations were perceived by many to be abandoning the urban poor, and in so doing, forsaking the calling of the urban mission of the church.

Nazarenes did not escape the “suburban captivity of the churches.”<sup>44</sup> Between 1950 and 1970 several prominent Nazarene churches moved from downtown locations to more suburban areas, including Los Angeles First Church and Chicago First Church.<sup>45</sup> Urban missiologist, Tom Nees, indicates that most Nazarene churches began as neighborhood-based congregations, but quickly became family-based congregations,

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<sup>42</sup> Ron Benefiel, “Re: Nazarene Ministry in Urban Contexts.” Email to author. October 18, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*, 47.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Cunningham, *Our Watchword and Song*, 435.



gradually decreasing their engagement with neighborhood needs and opportunities.<sup>46</sup> This meant that when families moved, the churches moved with them. The indicators that an expanding church used to measure impact and growth no longer fit the models needed to be effective in the urban environment.<sup>47</sup>

While some of these changes were based on societal class differences, it could be argued that these relocations were also racially motivated. After a century of slavery in America, and the lowest possible wages for sharecroppers and other hard labor jobs, African-Americans became an unnecessary labor force in the southern economy. The mechanical cotton picker became functional in the mid-1940s and immediately replaced forty field laborers. By the end of World War II, the vast majority of manual laborers were no longer needed. Millions of people from the south were instantly unemployed and displaced. The jobs were in the industrialized north, almost exclusively in large northern cities. This became known as the “Second Great Migration.”<sup>48</sup>

Black Americans moved from the South to the North; five million of them moved after 1940, during the time of the mechanization of cotton farming. In 1970, when the migration ended, black America was only half Southern, and less than a quarter rural; “urban” had become a euphemism for “black.” The black migration was one of the largest and most rapid mass internal movements of people in history—perhaps the greatest not caused by immediate threat of execution or starvation.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Tom Nees. “Re: Nazarene Ministry in Urban Contexts.” Email to author. October 7, 2015.

<sup>47</sup> Jim Copple, “Re: Nazarene Ministry in Urban Contexts.” Email to author. October 12, 2015.

<sup>48</sup> The First Great Migration (1910-1930) witnessed more than one million people move from the rural south to the urban northeast and midwest. The Second Great Migration, following the Great Depression and continuing until the middle of the Vietnam War (1940-1970), saw another five million people flood to the urban areas of the northeast and California.

<sup>49</sup> Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America*, quoted in Glen Kehrein, “The Times They Are a-Changing: The Suburbanization of Poverty,” in *A Heart for the Community: New Models for Urban and Suburban Ministry*, eds. John Fuder and Noel Castellanos (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 2013), 298.

The social impact of this migration has been well-documented. However, at the time the migration was taking place few people seemed to be asking the fundamental questions of where five million dislocated people would live, how they would be integrated into dramatically different cultures, and how they would be employed and educated. Although Jim Crow laws no longer applied, racism was rampant. The urban world exploded into flames that no one knew how to contain. “Resistance to blacks moving into white communities preceded a wholesale exodus, often referred to as ‘white flight,’ and resulted in the transformation of most major cities.”<sup>50</sup> While it was obvious that African-Americans needed to live somewhere, many people did not want them to live next door.<sup>51</sup> Entire black communities were forced into ghettos and high rise projects.

Meanwhile, European immigrants in northern cities had lived in isolated ethnic neighborhoods for decades. Entire sections of town were named for their constituents: Little Italy, Germantown, and Southies in Boston. They were miniature cities within cities. But while these Europeans were immigrants, they were white immigrants.

White flight was not only a residential phenomenon, urban congregations soon followed suit. Living in the midst of these changes, former University of Chicago Divinity School professor and social justice advocate, Gibson Winter, wrote a provocative book in 1961 analyzing what he called “the Protestant exodus from the

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<sup>50</sup> Kehrein, “The Times They Are a-Changing,” 302.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 303.

central city.”<sup>52</sup> His observations regarding the immigration of European whites and African-Americans to urban areas were revealing and predictive:

The in-migration of White and Negro [sic] newcomers also had a special effect; the Protestant retreat from these newcomers has created a schism in metropolitan religious life; the major White denominations<sup>53</sup> are retreating to the suburban and satellite areas, while Negro [sic] and sectarian Protestantism are beginning to dominate central city areas. The major White denominations have moved toward exclusive identification with the White middle-classes; in fact, they are insulating themselves geographically from the working-class people of the metropolitan areas. The net effect of population change has been an upgrading of the major denominations through social and physical insulation from the working classes.<sup>54</sup>

The Church of the Nazarene was not exempt from the impact of the Second Great Migration. Thousands of African-Americans migrated to Kansas City, Missouri, where the Church of the Nazarene’s denominational headquarters was located. As one of the most segregated cities in the midwest in the early 1940s, African-Americans were not allowed to eat in Kansas City public restaurants (only stand-up counters in drugstores), attend a theater showing, or occupy a hotel room. Property contracts included clauses prohibiting blacks from being owners or tenants.<sup>55</sup> “In 1940, over ninety percent of Kansas City’s African-Americans lived in an area of the city bounded, from north to south, by Independence and 27<sup>th</sup> streets.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*, 3.

<sup>53</sup> The Church of the Nazarene in this time period can be described as a “white denomination.” Cheryl Sanders included the Church of the Nazarene among the “basically lily-white holiness groups reflecting the sin and shame of Racist America.” Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African-American Religion and Culture* (1996): 103, quoted in Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, Kindle Location 7470.

<sup>54</sup> Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*, 47-48.

<sup>55</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 368.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

The denominational headquarters, publishing house, and seminary were located in that corridor. Due to overcrowded offices and changing demographics, a commission was appointed to study the issue and bring a report to the 1948 General Assembly. The commission's recommendation was to move all denominational properties to a safer part of town. A portion of the report stated: "We are realistically facing the fact that a strong Negro [sic] population in a community develops problems and situations that are not conducive to the best interests of work such as ours, and for which we are not justified in taking responsibility."<sup>57</sup> The warning was heeded. The report was accepted and the recommendation was adopted. Not long thereafter, new property was acquired several miles away in a more desirable part of town, thus reinforcing the Great Reversal.

As America was steadily becoming a more suburban society, Ross Douthat notes that the religious community that had been so important to incarnational ministry became harder to sustain in a commuter world than it had been when small towns and urban neighborhoods had been the norm.<sup>58</sup> Douthat further cites Dean Hogue's comprehensive study of mainline churches during that era. A representative sample of baby boomer Protestants revealed that 50 percent lived more than one hundred miles from the church where they had been confirmed and disciplined.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ross Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 80.

<sup>59</sup> Dean R. Hogue, Benton Johnson, and Donald A. Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers* (1994), as quoted in Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 80.

Idealized by television in sitcoms like *Leave it to Beaver* and *My Three Sons*, suburbanization became associated with the American dream, family values, and the middle-class good life.<sup>60</sup> Suburbs were close enough to the city to access the amenities the urban world provided, while being far enough away to avoid the daily struggles of life in high density neighborhoods.

### **Winds of Change**

Just as the exodus to the suburbs seemed to have reached its apex, there was a small, but growing, evangelical resurgence back to American cities in the late 1960s. This included a remnant of Nazarenes.

Influenced by the Civil Rights movement, the desire for a holistic Gospel that combined social action with evangelism, and by a growing body of theological literature that took seriously the city as a place of Christian ministry, Nazarenes joined other evangelicals in reclaiming ministry in the urban context. Nazarenes did not travel this path alone; they traveled it with other evangelicals.<sup>61</sup>

While many Nazarene churches were traveling the broader evangelical path to evacuate the urban centers, other internal influences were beginning to emerge in Nazarene circles to call the church back to its roots. William Greathouse was elected president of Nazarene Theological Seminary in 1968. Greathouse's considerable influence helped to reignite a passion among young, emerging pastors and church planters for the biblical and Wesleyan roots of Nazarene theology.

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<sup>60</sup> *Leave It to Beaver* aired from 1957 to 1963. *My Three Sons* aired from 1960 to 1972. Later sitcoms like *Happy Days* (aired from 1974 to 1984) further perpetuated the romanticized life of suburban society. During this same period, *Good Times* (aired 1974 to 1979) highlighted an African-American family living in a high-rise project in Chicago as an alternative to suburban utopia.

<sup>61</sup> Ingersol, *Past and Prospect*, 15.

Greathouse was elected general superintendent for the Church of the Nazarene in 1976, but before he left the seminary, he hired a gifted and forward-thinking theologian, Mildred Bangs Wynkoop. Ordained in the Church of the Nazarene, Wynkoop had been the founding president of Japan Nazarene Theological Seminary and taught missions and theology at Trevecca Nazarene College in Nashville, Tennessee. She became the theologian-in-residence at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Together, Greathouse and Wynkoop became two of the leading theological voices of the Church of the Nazarene during this important era of Nazarene history. Wynkoop wrote two highly influential books that inspired a renewed interest for social ministries in the urban context, *John Wesley: Christian Revolutionary* (1970) and *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (1972). These persuasive voices and cogent texts combined to provide a counterbalance to the fundamentalist leanings that had resulted in the Great Reversal.

Younger Nazarene pastors were listening, including Tom Nees. Pastoring in the urban core of Washington, D.C., Nees confessed he was “struggling to find a way to minister to the poor of my city.”<sup>62</sup> With a clearly articulated calling from God to conjoin evangelistic passion and compassionate love, Nees could see that the greatest problems of the city were deeply embedded and systemic, and required more than isolated individual renewal if real change was to occur. Like Wesley, Booth, Palmer, and Bresee before him, Nees believed that evangelical social action was necessary. “The youth movement of the 1960s, coupled with the Wesleyan renaissance and the book, *John Wesley: Christian*

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<sup>62</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 584.

*Revolutionary* by Mildred Wynkoop, reinforced Nees' desire to see the Church of the Nazarene actively involved in society."<sup>63</sup>

Nees wrote a doctoral thesis in 1976 entitled, "The Holiness Social Ethic and Nazarene Urban Ministry." He argued that holiness churches represent a significant ethical tradition that is needed to motivate the whole Church to respond to the social evils of society. "It is only within the relatively recent past, and then without a conscious effort to repudiate what can be referred to as the holiness social ethic, that Wesleyanism, or the holiness movement, has been divorced from social action. The causes for this retreat from a social ethic are many and complex, but due in part, if not primarily, to a failure to understand the ethical tradition which began with Wesley."<sup>64</sup>

Compelled to action, Nees founded Community of Hope, an urban development project in the inner core of Washington, D.C. There the gospel was proclaimed even as marginalized people were receiving health care, housing assistance, job training, legal aid, food, and clothing. A new watchword was popularized in the Church of the Nazarene—compassionate evangelism.

Other bright lights began to appear as Nazarenes returned to the cities with a renewed focus on ministries of mercy: The Lamb's Church in Manhattan, led by Paul Moore; Golden Gate Ministries in San Francisco, led by Michael Christensen; Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene, including the Bresee Institute, an experiential intern-based program designed to expose young leaders to holistic urban ministry, led by

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Tom Nees, "The Holiness Social Ethic and Nazarene Urban Ministry" (thesis, Wesley Theological Seminary, 1976), 6.

Ron Benefiel; Shepherd Community in Indianapolis, led by John Hay and Dean Cowles; and Liberation Community in Fort Worth, led by Bryan Stone. More urban leaders would soon follow—JoeAnn Ballard, David Best, John Calhoun, Orville Jenkins, Jr., Michael Mata, Samuel Smith, Fletcher Tink, and others. The services these urban churches provided included “medical clinics for the homeless, crisis intervention, client advocacy programs, job counseling, placement, and work skill training, and halfway house residencies.”<sup>65</sup>

The Board of General Superintendents issued a proclamation in the December, 1981 *Herald of Holiness*: “Where Christian holiness is truly alive, compassion is its beautiful fruit. . . . [Nazarenes should be always] seeking to do good to the bodies and souls of men; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and ministering to the needy, as opportunity and ability are given.”<sup>66</sup> This was followed by a pastoral letter, issued by the Board of General Superintendents in 1983, which affirmed:

A new social consciousness has moved across our church . . . the sense of ‘holy compassion’ was an authentic expression of the American Holiness Movement’s roots in the Wesleyan Revival. . . . The ministry of compassion was emphasized in such a manner as to place it *very near to the center of the fundamental reason for the church’s existence*.<sup>67</sup>

The pastoral letter concluded: “In light of the biblical perspective as well as our distinctive mission . . . [such social ministries should be] incorporated in the total

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<sup>65</sup> Michael Christensen, *City Streets City People* (1988), quoted in Conn, *The American City and the Evangelical Church*, 155.

<sup>66</sup> Cunningham et al., *Watchword and Song*, 586.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 587, emphasis added.



program of evangelism . . . to the entire community [without exclusion of people from lower socioeconomic levels].”<sup>68</sup>

During this period, the Church of the Nazarene formally established two urban-focused initiatives: (1) The Office of Urban Missions in 1979 and (2) Thrust to the Cities,<sup>69</sup> launched at the 1985 General Assembly. Led by General Superintendents Lewis, Johnson, Jenkins, Strickland, Stowe, and Greathouse, denominational leaders were supportive of this renewed emphasis on compassionate evangelism in the cities.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Nees, “Re: Nazarene Ministry in Urban Contexts.” The results of the Thrust to the Cities initiative were mixed. Nees comments, “I don’t know of any formal ‘after action review’ of the Thrust. Soon after I joined the United States/Canada office we did an informal study of the effectiveness of the ‘Thrust’ in the targeted United States and Canada cities. It might be worthwhile to interview some of those directly involved and convene an ‘after action review’ committee to help the [Board of General Superintendents] learn from its efforts.”

PART TWO  
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Following their spiritual heritage in the Wesleyan Revival of the eighteenth century, holiness churches in the United States, prior to and shortly following the American Civil War, were social activists with a holistic concern for personal salvation, compassionate evangelism, and biblical justice. Contrary to the notion that the revivalism of the American Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century impeded social change, Timothy Smith's doctoral thesis, "Popular Protestantism in Mid-Nineteenth Century America,"<sup>1</sup> demonstrated that the antebellum Methodists and other evangelical holiness churches initiated and led compassionate and corporate reforms with purposeful optimism.

Following the preaching and teaching of new school Calvinists such as Asa Mahan and Charles Finney from the Oberlin holiness revivals, the perfectionists led abolitionist campaigns and emphasized the civil rights of women and minorities. Later, leaders like Phoebe Palmer, Nathan Bangs, and Benjamin T. Roberts of the Methodist

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy L. Smith, "Popular Protestantism in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," PhD diss., Harvard University, 1955.

Church, North, emphasized a Christian perfection that underscored ministry to the urban poor in the largest cities of the northeastern United States.

### **The Urban History of the Church of the Nazarene**

The Church of the Nazarene is the progeny of both the Wesleyan Revival of eighteenth-century England and the American Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century. Wesley's emphasis on social holiness, and the American Holiness Movement's concern for the poor and disenfranchised, greatly impacted Bresee and the early Nazarenes. They turned their attention to the plight of the urban poor and to other social issues including prohibition and the women's suffrage movement. However, in later years, while the Church of the Nazarene continued to focus on entire sanctification, fear of liberalism and compromise with the world led the church toward fundamentalist tendencies and, consequently, to minimize their calling to the welfare of persons and transformation of society. Smith's work helped the Church of the Nazarene rediscover its roots, and, as Stan Ingersol points out, along with Carl F. H. Henry's, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947) and David Moberg's *The Great Reversal* (1972), assisted the broader evangelical church to rediscover compassionate holiness that changes individuals and the social fabric.<sup>2</sup>

Despite Smith's careful research, some Nazarenes continue with a doctrinal view of holiness that is individualistic and separatist. In the current American milieu, members of the church often filter their theology of social reform through the lens of national

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<sup>2</sup> Stan Ingersol, *Nazarene Roots: Pastors, Prophets, Revivalists and Reformers* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2009), 167-168.

politics. This frequently hinders compassionate engagement in areas where the Church of the Nazarene could potentially be most effective.

Five years after Smith published *Revivalism and Social Reform*, he wrote the first historically-validated analysis of the beginnings of the Church of the Nazarene. *Called Unto Holiness—The Story of the Nazarenes: The Formative Years* explicates a cogent history of the Church of the Nazarene’s origins and development in its first quarter century. Smith tied together the denominational narrative of the Church of the Nazarene in ways that previously had not been considered. In his reading of the primary documents, Smith discovered that the Church of the Nazarene was born out of a compromise between two visions of the Christian life that were similar, yet slightly different. The contrast between these visions was sometimes held in tension, but sometimes became the source of conflict. Smith contended that “neither the origin nor the subsequent history of the Church of the Nazarene can be understood without a knowledge of the two holiness traditions, urban and rural.”<sup>3</sup>

Smith’s work is pioneering in that it was the first thesis-driven work on Nazarene history. He did not impose his own hypothesis on the material; rather, he studied the primary documents and a theory emerged from the original sources to frame his arguments. The distinguishing characteristics that he discovered in the urban holiness contribution to the church included a national vision, an educational bent, and a greater

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Called Unto Holiness*, 27.

sense of understanding and empathy with the vision of Wesley and early Methodism.<sup>4</sup> Smith identified the urbanized sectors of the young denomination with the two northern groups that merged at Chicago in 1907.<sup>5</sup> Smith emphasized that both groups had their centers of strength in cities or suburbs. By contrast, the southern group that united with the Pentecostal Nazarenes the following year was predominantly rural and firm in its stand against formality and worldliness. Ingersol notes that the ranks of the rural Nazarenes were steadily supplemented in following years through aggressive evangelism and growth in the southwest and midwest, and, in the 1920s, by the uniting of a sizable body of Methodist fundamentalists from the Dakotas.<sup>6</sup> The union of the rural and urban holiness traditions was essential to understanding Nazarene history and the current state of the geographic locations and philosophical positions of the church.

One drawback of Smith's work is that it is limited to the holiness movement up through 1932. Furthermore, Smith did not write about the evolution and changing dynamics of Nazarene theology. In a conference held in 1984, he gave an address in which he stated that he had erred in ignoring the church's ever-evolving theology. He confessed that he probably left many readers thinking that Nazarene theology had not changed, when it had, and he regretted this omission.<sup>7</sup> The pendulum had swung from

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<sup>4</sup> Stan Ingersol, "The Writing of Nazarene History," (symposium lecture, Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN, 1999). Stan Ingersol Collection, Nazarene Archives, Lenexa, KS.

<sup>5</sup> The ecclesial groups that merged at Chicago in 1907 were the eastern-based Association of Pentecostal Churches of America and the Pacific coast-based Church of the Nazarene.

<sup>6</sup> Ingersol, "The Writing of Nazarene History."

<sup>7</sup> Ingersol, Stan. "Re: Early Nazarene Leaders." Email to author, July 7, 2017.

urban ecclesiology to rural, and from primitive Wesleyanism to more revivalistic emphases. The impact on Nazarene doctrine and practice cannot be overstated.

### **A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology of Urban Ministry**

The majority of urban church planting models are theologically Reformed<sup>8</sup> or Charismatic<sup>9</sup> in nature. These church planting movements are indispensable and should be celebrated; however, a Wesleyan-Holiness voice is also needed in planting and sustaining urban churches. Wesleyan practices conducive to life in the urban context focus less on theological systems and proposition-based apologetics and more on the Spirit-led vitality of what Wesley called “religion of the heart,”<sup>10</sup> a concept Donald Thorsen maintains is “too categorically unsystematic and Spirit-oriented for Calvinists.”<sup>11</sup> It is often implied that Wesleyan spirituality is more helpful in guiding the practical application of Christian discipleship, while Reformed spirituality focuses more on the propositional and logically constructed systems of belief. While this dichotomy may be exaggerated, the complexity and unpredictability of life in the city make more technical theological constructs and inflexible institutional structures difficult to manage.

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<sup>8</sup> Leading Reformed church planting movements, led by new Calvinist theologians, include Acts 29 Network, The Gospel Coalition, and Redeemer City to City.

<sup>9</sup> The most prominent Charismatic urban church planting network is Hillsong Church of Australia. Affiliated with the Assemblies of God, Hillsong is currently present in the major cities of seventeen countries.

<sup>10</sup> David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), Kindle Location 2701.

<sup>11</sup> Don Thorsen, *Calvin vs. Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), xv.

Thorsen further points out that Wesleyan theology serves as a deterrent to the potential danger of triumphalism often found in Pentecostalism. Wesley's strong advocacy for the poor was not based merely on compassion; it was his belief that ministry to and among the poor was also a means of God's grace to the church. The Wesleyan understanding of the means of grace, both instituted and prudential, as the channels whereby God seeks, saves, and sanctifies, are potentially highly effective ways of discipling in the urban context. Acts of piety and acts of mercy are given balanced importance in Wesleyan spirituality. Prudential means of grace, such as acts of mercy and serving the poor, are as important to Wesleyan spiritual formation as the instituted means of grace, such as prayer, Bible study, sacraments, and Christian conferencing (small groups).<sup>12</sup>

According to Thorsen, Wesleyanism at its core is dynamic, creative, and adaptable.<sup>13</sup> This is helpful in regard to being purposeful and relevant to one's context, but that same adaptability does not always lend itself to reproducible models. Thus, the paradigm of Wesleyan spirituality will serve more as a toolbox rather than a replicable prototype for urban church planting.

Wesley's driving theological and pastoral concern was that God's grace is both saving and enabling, working with human response in synergistic ways to empower God's people for spiritual formation and redemptive work in the world. While the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 55. John Wesley's understanding of the means of grace will be explicated in the "Wesleyan-Holiness Spiritual Formation: Means of Grace" section of Chapter 3.

<sup>13</sup> Thorsen, *Calvin vs. Wesley*, 105, 116, 121.



precision of his theological construct may be viewed as insufficient to his ecclesial practice, Wesley drew generously from the work of other theological traditions. In *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*, Wesleyan scholar Randy Maddox exhibits the broad range of Wesley's generous orthodoxy by demonstrating how he integrated the traditions of Eastern and Western Christian streams of thought into a practical guide for the spiritual formation of the Methodist people. Wesley's theological construct was built upon two co-definitive truths of Christianity: "[W]ithout God's grace, there is no salvation; without human participation, God's grace will not save."<sup>14</sup> Maddox encapsulates these parallel truths in his phrase, "responsible grace." God's grace of free salvation is a gracious gift which no human being can earn or deserve. This is the theological understanding of monergism, or that God acts with sovereign action irrespective of human response. However, God's gracious work also includes empowerment that enables every person to willfully and purposefully act in responsible obedience. This is the theological understanding of synergism, or the moral freedom to work with and for God's redemptive purposes for the world.

Timothy Tennent submits that "[responsible grace] manages to capture in a single phrase the perfect balance between Augustinian pessimism and Pelagian optimism."<sup>15</sup> Or, without God, there is no hope for salvation or healing, and without human response toward God, there is no church. God's grace is part and parcel of the invitation,

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<sup>14</sup> Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 19.

<sup>15</sup> Timothy Tennent, "Responsible Grace," Timothy Tennent Blog, entry posted February 5, 2015, <http://www.timothytennent.com/2015/02/> (accessed July 20, 2017).

personally and corporately, to do God's work in the world. While salvation is always a response to the Divine non-coercive initiative, the Christian's response-ability is indispensable. God's prevenient, saving, sanctifying, and enabling grace continues to nourish the believer.

Maddox's contribution to Wesley studies is considerable, but none is more notable than his stress on Wesley's recognition of the human tendency toward self-justification. "Given the subtleness and deceitfulness of sin, Wesley was convinced that every Christian needed spiritual direction to provide accountability for their growth in holiness."<sup>16</sup> Accountability is to suggest that some form of self-imposed discipline is necessary for Christian life and witness. This personal and corporate responsibility toward growth in holiness is of particular importance to urban ecclesiology. In the context of overwhelming density and intricate diversity, inhabitants of cities seek interdependent relationships as a means of survival. The Wesleyan emphasis on the necessity of accountability for balanced spiritual growth is beneficial to any spirituality for the city.

Wesley was convinced that the development of Christian character and the forming of a Christian mind must be nurtured by the means of grace.<sup>17</sup> This was a primary reason why Wesley encouraged the general rules of Methodist discipline to include the three-fold injunction: avoid all known sin, do as much good as one can, *and*

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<sup>16</sup> Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 212.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

*attend all the ordinances of God.*<sup>18</sup> These rules did not earn one God's favor, but were needed to "nurture the reshaping of their character into Christlikeness."<sup>19</sup>

The means of grace known as Christian conferencing took on a practical component through group gatherings that included class meetings, bands, and select societies designed to encourage every person toward Christlikeness. Each of these "conferencing" gatherings had varying levels of accountability. Small groups developed the life of the Spirit in the participants and were a means through which God extended enabling grace to each person. Without this accountability, Wesley believed that one's growth in grace was severely diminished, and he "repeatedly denounced the folly of those who desire 'the end without the means,' i.e., those who expect growth in faith and holiness without regular participation in the means through which God has chosen to convey grace."<sup>20</sup> Wesley's theological concerns for responsible grace provided a clear ecclesial structure to the Methodist movement and offers a helpful paradigm for planting Wesleyan-Holiness churches in the urban context today.

By Maddox's own admission, adopting Wesley as a spiritual mentor does not serve current contexts well by simply duplicating his structures. Wesley's methodology fit his contemporary context and was developed in response to his specific cultural milieu. The Methodist plan of discipleship described in the general rules found practical expression in his day through the accountability of class meetings, bands, select societies,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 211, emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 196.

and other participation in the means of grace. Whatever form Wesleyan-Holiness spirituality takes today, finding ways to increase mutual accountability remains essential to spiritual formation. Any efforts toward the renewal of urban church planting in the Church of the Nazarene will be dependent on returning to the Wesleyan way of personal transformation in and through Christian community. Regardless of form, the critical question of Christian conferencing, “How goes it with your soul?”,<sup>21</sup> finds new expression as a means of grace today.

### **The Urban Strategy of the First Christians**

Early Christianity in the Greco-Roman cities of the Roman Empire was primarily an urban movement that introduced men and women, rich and poor, slave and free, to Jesus Christ. For the first one hundred years, the impact of Christianity in rural areas was minimal compared to the effect in cities. In *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome*, Rodney Stark demonstrates through scientific data and statistical analysis that the early rise and spread of Christianity was an urban phenomenon, accomplished through ordinary Christians living out their faith in Christian communities. He observes, “The original meaning of the word ‘pagan’ (paganus) was ‘rural person,’ or more colloquially ‘country hick.’ It came to have religious meaning because after Christianity had triumphed in the cities, most of the rural people remained unconverted.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Henry H. Knight III and F. Douglas Powe, Jr., *Transforming Community: The Wesleyan Way to Missional Congregations* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2016), Kindle Location 798.

<sup>22</sup> Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 2.

The reason for this urban emphasis was strategic. Paul was a city person whose ministry strategy, according to Stark, was focused completely on planting city churches. There is no biblical or extra-biblical record of Paul ever preaching or teaching outside of a city. “Pauline Christianity was entirely urban. In that respect, it stood on the growing edge of the Christian movement, for it was in the cities of the Roman Empire that Christianity, though born in the village of Palestine, had its greatest successes until well after Constantine.”<sup>23</sup> While the contribution of missionaries like Paul was vital to the growth of early Christian communities, Stark suggests that conversions happened most often and most rapidly through the close social networks and relationships of ordinary urban Christians.

The objectives of such a concentrated focus in the cities were obvious. Cities were more densely populated than rural areas. Ramsey MacMullen estimates that the average population density in cities of the Roman Empire may have approached 200 per acre, an equivalent to modern Western cities found only in industrial slums.<sup>24</sup> Cities were also places where political and cultural power resided, and due to the fact that they were most often the first destination of immigrants seeking a fresh start, cities were cosmopolitan. This factor led cities to be more flexible than the country hamlets and open to change. First century cities were linked together by Roman highways and trade routes, and became the economic engines where people could buy and sell, market and trade.

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<sup>23</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 8.

<sup>24</sup> Ramsey MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations* (New Haven: CT, Yale University Press, 1974), 28-56.

Urbanization became more than a choice of where one would live; it was a way of survival. “[U]rbanization became the means of Hellenization.”<sup>25</sup>

Within twenty years of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, Christianity was transformed from a relatively small and exclusive faith in rural Galilee to an urban missionary movement reaching to the largest, most influential cultural centers in the Roman Empire. Wayne Meeks maintains that the mission of the first Christians was conceived from start to finish as an urban strategy.<sup>26</sup> It could be argued that because the Christian faith captured the heart of the cities that it eventually gained the attention of the broader expanse of society.

In other historical research of the early church, Rodney Stark offers a profound case for Christianity’s success in the urban areas:

To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with widows and orphans, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity . . . [for what Christians] brought was not simply an urban movement, but *a new culture*.<sup>27</sup>

These are among other spiritual factors at work in the first century that account for the impact of the first Christian movement, but the fact remains, any church with the goal of “making Christlike disciples in the nations” must go where the most potential converts can be found. This is not license to neglect the suburbs, extra-urban, rural, or other

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<sup>25</sup> Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>27</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 162, emphasis added.

populations, for all are in need of Christ. Nonetheless, it is necessary to underscore, and history bears it out, “all ambitious missionary movements are, or soon become, urban.”<sup>28</sup>

While Stark’s conclusions that the early success of propagating Christianity was primarily in cities, and then moved to rural areas, the vast majority of Nazarene work today is in the rural and suburban contexts. How to adjust course and move to urban after decades of understanding church in a less complex and stable environment will require an intentional and prayerful new missional strategy. The importance of social networks and trusted relationships in urban contexts must continue to be emphasized.

### **A Sociology of Urban Culture in the American City**

Perhaps no academic in the last quarter century has made more of a contribution to urban missiology than Harvie M. Conn. With great prescience, Conn discerned the changing cultural dynamics around cities and maintained that “an urban world required not suburban theological and missionary education with a class on the city, but ‘training in the cities.’ And training that combines the study with the street, that teaches people to move easily from the books to the barrios.”<sup>29</sup> Playing “the role of revivalist”<sup>30</sup> for renewal in the city, his writings, teachings, and persistent example helped to birth a

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>29</sup> Harvie M. Conn, newsletter, December 1983, quoted in International Bulletin of Mission Research, <http://www.internationalbulletin.org/issues/2011-04/2011-04-212-gornik.html> (accessed September 22, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Urban “revivalist” was ascribed to Conn by urban missiologist, Mark Gornik, in a tribute called “The Legacy of Harvie M. Conn,” 181-197.

rejuvenated emphasis on urban studies and urban church planting that had lain dormant for decades.

In *The American City and the Evangelical Church*, Conn analyzed the history of the church in the American city through the lens of three time frames: 1870-1920, 1920-1970, and 1970-1990. Recounting “the principal target of the early church in its first 300 years was the city,”<sup>31</sup> Conn refutes two cynical biases regarding the evangelical church and the American city. First, the anti-urban bias that the city is a stronghold of evil, impious and secular, with no hope for redemption and lift. Second, the greatest opportunities for the church to succeed are more easily achieved in the rural context. With an expressed interest in “the ethno-sociological makeup of the city,”<sup>32</sup> Conn contends that the history of the city and the church in the city are intertwined and cannot be dichotomized into good versus evil. Rather, the gospel in the city must be viewed with a renewed vibrant potentiality, capable of both evangelical transformation and social reform.

Conn traces the history of the church in the city during the formative years of the Church of the Nazarene. His survey of the changing cultural worldview of the evangelical church and ministry to the city from 1870 to 1920 offers revealing insights into the evolving movement of the Church of the Nazarene from urban to rural. Of particular importance are his sociological analyses of the rise of suburbia and subsequent white flight from the city, his focus on American individualism as a contributing factor to the

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<sup>31</sup> Conn, *The American City and the Evangelical Church*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 10.



privatization of urban life, and the racial and religious perfect storm of suburban decentralization and urban concentration.<sup>33</sup> Conn highlights the missional conflict of the time: “Urban concentration and suburban decentralization in 1920 had found centrifugal and centripetal forces merging into one point in time.”<sup>34</sup> Phineas F. Bresee, the founding pastor of the Church of the Nazarene and the first general superintendent of the denomination, died in 1915. Void of his guiding vision for Nazarene ecclesiology, the conflicting forces jeopardized an enduring concentration on the church’s purpose in American cities.

While Conn’s work was pioneering in many respects, it was written more than twenty years ago, and significant changes in urban church planting have occurred since then. His chapter entitled “Into the Future” was in many ways prophetic, yet some of his projections have not come to fruition.<sup>35</sup> Rather than growing the suburbs and vacating the cities, the rise of the middle-class has led to more gentrification in the urban cores. Further, while Conn’s assessment of an energized minority and the rise of immigrant churches was predictive, the rapid rise of immigration and its impact on multicultural adaptation has culminated much faster than Conn could have realized. Conn’s contribution to a missiology for the city is profound and abiding. The future of planting

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 56-58.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>35</sup> Harvie M. Conn, ed., *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997).

and renewing urban churches is sustained by his prophetic challenge, “Expect great things from God for the city; attempt great things for God in the city.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 11.

## CHAPTER 3

### URBAN ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE WESLEYAN-HOLINESS TRADITION

The phrase Wesleyan-Holiness in this chapter title is intentional. While the Wesleyan and Holiness theological perspectives are similar, they are not identical. Primitive Wesleyanism, with the resultant Wesleyan Revival of the eighteenth century, and the American Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century are distinctive, not only because they originate from different centuries, but because they were born out of unique contexts. The Wesleyan Revival arose in the context of the dawn of the industrial age in a somewhat sophisticated, if not spiritually cold, English Anglicanism, and then moved with impassioned spiritual force to the marginalized of England's society, including prisoners, coal miners, and the urban poor. The American Holiness Movement was engendered in the context of American Methodism, frontier revivalism, and the upsurge of camp meeting associations sweeping the young nation with such force that church historians have deemed this period the Second Great Awakening.<sup>1</sup> Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology affirms there are unique differences, but when conjoined they form the stream that feeds the theological foundations and collective experience of the Church of

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<sup>1</sup> Historians date the Second Great Awakening between 1790 and 1840.

the Nazarene. Thus, the Church of the Nazarene is not the byproduct of either/or; it is the result of both/and—an integrated offspring of both movements.

### **Wesleyan-Holiness Distinctive: The Optimism of Grace**

Grace is a hallmark for all Christian faith—Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox—but the immediate and ongoing impact on a person’s life is expressed in varying degrees. Wesleyan-Holiness theology conveys grace, individually and corporately, with great optimism and salvific effect. Nazarenes believe that grace is needed by all and available to all irrespective of moral or social condition. Wesley was fond of portraying grace as “being free for all and free in all.”<sup>2</sup> “Free *for* all” means it is available to everyone; “free *in* all” means that grace need not be desired or even asked for.<sup>3</sup> It is simply available, freely given and distributed without measure in every person. The fundamental belief in genuine, life-changing conversion that leads to radical spiritual transformation infused the teaching, preaching, and practice of the American Holiness Movement and the early Nazarenes. “Theology infused with a personal experience of God’s grace—this is Wesleyanism.”<sup>4</sup>

The optimism of grace has a clear *telos* (goal, end). Timothy Smith affirmed that Wesley, and his theological descendants, professed that the pursuit of a Christlike character was the final disposition of God’s grace in a person’s life:

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<sup>2</sup> Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *John Wesley’s Message Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 100.

Though never implying freedom from ignorance, error, or physical or psychic frailty, he believed hallowing grace to be available “now, and by simple faith.” The experience of the new birth broke one free of sinful deeds and habits. The subsequent experience of “entire” sanctification brought deliverance from the inward bent to sinning and enthroned love as the ruling impulse of the heart. . . . Nazarenes believe the original emphasis to be both scriptural and relevant.<sup>5</sup>

The optimism of grace extends beyond the transformation of individuals; it transforms neighborhoods, cities, and cultures. When crafting the core values for the Church of the Nazarene, the Board of General Superintendent’s conclusion stated, “We believe that human nature, and ultimately society can be radically and permanently changed by the grace of God.”<sup>6</sup> It is this fundamental affirmation of grace that undergirds all Wesleyan-Holiness beliefs and practices.

### **Wesleyan-Holiness Distinctive: The Wesleyan Quadrilateral and Via Media**

Many have suggested that John Wesley was not a systematic theologian in the same vein as the Continental Reformers who developed intricate doctrinal constructs.<sup>7</sup> Given his pragmatic bent as a man of action, some have wondered if Wesley had a

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<sup>5</sup> Timothy L. Smith, “Nazarenes and the Wesleyan Mission: Can We Learn from Our History?” (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1979), 2. Originally, this was an address delivered at the Church of the Nazarene’s annual leadership conference in January, 1979. Smith’s purpose for the address in the preface was, “simply to ask what lessons learned from the long history of Methodism’s relation to the doctrine of Christian holiness will help Nazarenes keep it in its central place in our faith and fellowship.”

<sup>6</sup> The Board of General Superintendents, “A Living Faith: What Nazarenes Believe – Core Values” conclusion section.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth L. Carder, “What Difference Does Knowing Wesley Make?” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 22. The final 1559 edition of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Latin: *Institutio Christianae Religionis*) contained 79 chapters. Based on the *Apostle’s Creed*, Calvin based the four divisions of his systematic on: “I believe in God the Father; I believe in Jesus Christ; I believe in the Holy Spirit; I believe in the holy catholic church.”

systematic schema at all. The point is validated in that the closest document to a systematic theology written by Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, reads more like a catechism than a tome. Reflecting on Wesley's background, he was trained as an Anglican priest in the Church of England and was a spiritual heir of the English Reformation. At the behest of Henry VIII, the Archbishop of Canterbury and others traveled to Geneva to consider the advantages and disadvantages of a similar religious movement in the Magisterial Reformation. Ultimately choosing a different approach than their ecumenical contemporaries, "the Church of England intentionally constructed a theological 'middle way,' a *via media* between Reformed Protestantism and Roman Catholicism."<sup>8</sup> Among other things, this middle way embraced the classical *solas* of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>9</sup> However, the Church of England's overarching concern was that the Reformed doctrine of Scripture alone was literalistic enough to be considered dangerously narrow. This perception caused the English Reformers to balance what they perceived as too limited a view of hermeneutics with other sources of doctrinal authority. "While accepting the primary authority of Scripture, the English divines felt strongly the other authorities, reason and tradition in particular, should also have a place in formulating theology."<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, instead of constructing a formal systematic

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<sup>8</sup> William M. Greathouse, "The Theological Vision that Guides Clergy Preparation in the Church of the Nazarene," *Didache: Faithful Teaching* 12:1 (June 2001), <http://didache.nazarene.org/index.php/volume-1-1/93-v1n1-greathouse/file> (accessed January 2, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> The five classical *solas* of the Protestant Reformation include, *sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone), *sola fide* (by faith alone), *sola gratia* (by grace alone), *solo Christo* (through Christ alone), and *solus Deo gloria* (glory to God alone).

<sup>10</sup> William M. Greathouse, "What are the Wesleyan Distinctives that Shape and Inform Christian Higher Education Today?" (paper presented at the inauguration of President Robert I. Brower, Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, CA, April 16, 1998).

theology, the Church of England's efforts were focused on "practical divinity."<sup>11</sup> The *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion* replaced formal creeds and *The Book of Common Prayer* became the liturgical guide for every Anglican parish.

This was the sacrosanct environment in which John Wesley was nurtured. Born the son of an Anglican cleric and educated at Christ Church, Oxford, Wesley became a devout professor, pastor, and missionary of high church Anglicanism and was a loyal churchman. However, through the influence of Peter Bohler and the Moravians, the devotional writings of Law, Taylor, and à Kempis, and his own cherished Aldersgate experience a week before his thirty-sixth birthday, Wesley was led to a new perspective on Christian experience. Like the Anglicans before him, his collection of sermons and written commentaries became the guiding teaching source and interpretive authority of Methodist preachers. He also affirmed Anglicanism's "threefold fount of guidance and authority,"<sup>12</sup> that is, Scripture, reason, and tradition. But Wesley's observations of others and his personal impressions led him to add another criterion for testing moral truth—the practical divinity of Christian experience. This in no way exalted the subjective whims, moods, attitudes, and opinions of individuals over Scripture or tradition. For Wesley, Christian experience was the recognition of "the centrality of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church," and that the Spirit was the source of experience in the life of a believer.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Don Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2005), 39.

Concerning this important aspect of Wesley's viewpoint, Tom Noble writes:

This awareness of God's gracious "presence" is what Wesley meant by "experience," and it was for him as real and unmistakable a perception as any sensory awareness might be. . . . Spiritual experience comes when, to complement our five physical senses, the Holy Spirit gives us the spiritual sense to be aware of the presence of the reality of God. The inner subjective response is a response by the Spirit to the objective reality of the true and living God who encounters us.<sup>14</sup>

William Greathouse suggests this connection between the Holy Spirit and experience is, "the truly new and revolutionary aspect of John Wesley's theology."<sup>15</sup> Then, in a stirring synopsis, Greathouse expands the thought:

It was John Wesley's understanding of the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers that gave to his theology a new focus, source, and form. In his recognition of the role of the Spirit in Christian experience, the Anglican Trilateral (Scripture, reason, and tradition) became "the Wesleyan Quadrilateral" (Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience). The new *focus* of Wesley's faith and ethic was on "holiness of heart and life," or Christian perfection; its new *source* was experience; its new *form*, "the restoration of the neglected doctrine of holiness to its merited position in the Protestant understanding of Christianity."<sup>16</sup>

The phrase, Wesleyan quadrilateral, was coined in 1964 by Albert Outler in his watershed study simply called, "John Wesley."<sup>17</sup> Wesley never used the phrase himself, nor did he suggest these terms as a methodological formula for ensuring proper

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<sup>13</sup> Greathouse, "Wesleyan Distinctives," 2.

<sup>14</sup> T.A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 15-16.

<sup>15</sup> Greathouse, "Wesleyan Distinctives," 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., emphasis in original. Final quote from George Croft Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), 359.

<sup>17</sup> Albert C. Outler, "John Wesley" in *A Library of Protestant Thought*, ed. John Dillenberger, (New York: Oxford Press, 1964), Introduction.



orthodoxy, but throughout his writings and sermons these four elements are recurring themes that he held up as sources of authority for Christian theology. However, for him, Scripture was the primary authority.

Weems states, “each of the four [Scripture, tradition, reason, experience] are interdependent and no one can be subsumed by the other . . . all four guidelines should instruct all our theological reflection.”<sup>18</sup> Randy Maddox suggests, “Wesley’s so-called ‘quadrilateral’ of theological authorities could be more adequately described as a unilateral *rule* of Scripture within a trilateral *hermeneutic* of reason, tradition, and experience.”<sup>19</sup> Others have written extensively regarding the linguistic and existential problems with a strict quadrilateral.<sup>20</sup> But regardless of the terminology used, these sources of authority continue to serve the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition as “the criteria by which theological ideas can be tested for truth,”<sup>21</sup> and remain vital to any purposeful church planting in the city.

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<sup>18</sup> Weems, *John Wesley’s Message Today*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 46, emphasis in original. Maddox is elaborating on a phrase first coined by John Giffin, “Scriptural Standards in Religion: John Wesley’s Letters to William Law and James Hervey,” *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 16:143-68.

<sup>20</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of the current tensions within Wesleyan studies pertaining to Outler’s quadrilateral, see Noble, *Holy Trinity*, 12-18.

<sup>21</sup> Diane Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness: The Heart of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2010), 320. Leclerc christened the quadrilateral as the “name for Wesley’s system of checks and balances.”

## **Wesleyan-Holiness Spiritual Formation: Means of Grace**

Wesley often talked about the means of grace. He believed that while God's grace cannot be earned (free grace), Christians do not idly stand by to receive grace, but actively engage in the means of grace. The means of grace are not salvific themselves; rather, they are the various ways God works to give daily strength, abiding peace, renewing faith, spiritual power, and a pure heart to his children.<sup>22</sup> In summary, they are the mediums through which God's grace works to make us holy.

While Wesley never intended to be anything other than Anglican, he and his followers were given the name Methodists because "they prescribed certain methods or practices for growth in Christlikeness."<sup>23</sup> In a sermon with the same title, Wesley expressly defined the means of grace as "outward signs, words, actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."<sup>24</sup> By devoting entire sermons to the means of grace, and then insisting on their practice in Methodist communities of faith, Wesley emphasized their importance to healthy and balanced spiritual formation. Wesleyan scholar, Don Thorsen, underscores this distinctive emphasis:

Unlike Calvin, Wesley thought that God preveniently used the means of grace to call people to salvation as well as for working in and through them. . . . In this

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<sup>22</sup> David A. Busic, "Do Spiritual Leaders Fast?" *Board of General Superintendent's Leadership Newsletter*, January 2016, <http://www.nazarene.org/sites/default/file/docs/bgs/WOH/WOH0116.html> (accessed January 4, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> Ron Benefiel, "Our Wesleyan Tradition: Wesleyan Faith and Practice and the PLNU Mission," *Didache: Faithful Teaching* 12:2 (Winter 2013), <http://didache.nazarene.org/index.php/volume-12-2/878-didache-v12n2-01-our-wesleyan-tradition-plnu/file> (accessed January 4, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> John Wesley, *The Complete Works of John Wesley, Volume 1, Sermons 1-53* (Harrington, DE: Delmarva Publications, Inc., 2014), Kindle Location 4000

regard, Wesley's emphasis on the prevenient nature of grace affirmed that God and people work—albeit mysteriously—together for their conversion, perseverance, and spiritual growth. God intends that the means of grace should include responsible action on the part of people.<sup>25</sup>

Wesley's belief that God's Spirit is working continuously and cooperatively, even outside of the church, caused him to delineate between instituted and prudential means of grace. Instituted (appointed) were the means of grace established by God in the Scriptures; prudential (wise) were the means of grace not explicitly stated as such in the Bible, but found to be beneficial for the pursuit of Christlikeness. Prudential practices for Wesley included, but were not limited to, "watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and exercise of the presence of God."<sup>26</sup>

The means of grace can be divided into two categories: works of piety and works of mercy. Works of piety are primarily what we do to enhance our personal relationship with Christ. Works of mercy are connected to what we do to engage God's ministry and mission in the world. Both works of piety and works of mercy have an individual component, what one can do alone, and a communal component, what must be done with the help of others. Individual works of piety include meditating on the scriptures, faithfully attending worship, sharing faith with others (evangelism), praying, and fasting. Communal works of piety include participation in the sacraments, accountability to one another (also known as Christian conferencing), Bible study, and preaching.

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<sup>25</sup> Thorsen, *Calvin vs. Wesley*, 55-56.

<sup>26</sup> John Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. Thomas Jackson (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprinted Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 8.323-24, quoted in Thorsen, *Calvin vs. Wesley*, 56.

### **Wesleyan-Holiness Spiritual Formation: Christian Conferencing**

Understanding the propensity of sin in the heart of people, and the tenacious temptation to live isolated lives, Wesley believed that every growing Christian needed accountable relationships and disciplined practices. While a new birth is necessary to begin a new life in Christ, it is only the beginning. Christians are born; disciples are made. The Christian journey is initiated, encompassed, and empowered by God's grace, but a committed personal participation with God's grace is needed and expected. For Wesley, this was accomplished through a means of nurturing discipleship and church renewal he referred to as Christian conferencing.

Different levels of Christian conferencing existed within Wesley's structure of discipleship. The first level was the Methodist society. A society was a geographically located group of fifty to one hundred people, comparable to a local parish. However, Wesley did not intend for these societies to replace regular worship services, and was careful not to allow the society meetings to interfere with the attendance of Anglican church services.<sup>27</sup> His loyalty to the Church of England continued despite the development of the societies. The first Methodist society was begun in 1739 in response to the needs Wesley sensed from a group of people who wanted to deepen their Christian walk. The fundamental purposes of the societies were "to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to *watch over one another in love*, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."<sup>28</sup> In Michael Henderson's treatment of Wesley's system of

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<sup>27</sup> D. Michael Henderson, *A Model for Making Disciples: John Wesley's Class Meeting* (Nappanee, IN: Francis Asbury Press of Evangel Publishing House, 1997), 85.

discipleship groups, he points out, “The primary function of the society was cognitive instruction; it was the educational channel by which the tenets of Methodism were presented.”<sup>29</sup>

The second level of conferencing was the class meeting. As a subdivision of the societies, the class meetings would become early Methodism’s most effective method of discipleship, and perhaps Wesley’s greatest structural contribution to the life of holiness. If the society was the cognitive mode of discipleship, Henderson refers to the class meeting as “the behavioral mode,”<sup>30</sup> emphasizing the practical design and environment best suited for spiritual transformation.

The third level of conferencing was the band, and facilitated what Henderson has termed “affective redirection.”<sup>31</sup> The bands were small groups of five to ten people, voluntary in nature, that were intended for more intimate spiritual conversations between those with shared affinities, e.g., age, gender, marital status. The more intimate nature of the bands allowed for the probing accountability of examining motives, attitudes, blind spots, and emotions. Henderson maintains that the band was Wesley’s personal favorite.<sup>32</sup> It was philosophically closest to his experience at the Holy Club in Oxford, and later, the experiment of close conversations from the Fetter Lane Society in London.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Wesley, *Works* (Jackson), 8:269, emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> Henderson, *A Model for Making Disciples*, 84.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113.

Other levels of conferencing included the select societies and penitent bands. The select society was the “training mode,”<sup>34</sup> and reserved for an exclusive group of men and women considered to be present and future leaders of the movement.<sup>35</sup> The mentoring culture of select societies was crucial to providing a regular stream of capably trained leaders for every level of Methodism. Wesley viewed them as a think tank to strategize future developments within the movement. Unlike any other conferencing group, the select societies had no formal leader or set agenda other than to allow for peer learning and honest conversations. Wesley continued active participation in a select society until at least two years before his death.<sup>36</sup>

Penitent bands functioned as the “rehabilitative mode”<sup>37</sup> of societies, designed for those who were struggling with grave personal issues of addictions or other deep-seated areas of moral or social dysfunction in their lives. Alcoholism, for example, was a societal scourge in eighteenth-century England and destroyed families in epidemic proportions.<sup>38</sup> The groups would meet often during times when the penitents would be most tempted to revisit their former lifestyles and held the participants to a very strict format of accountability and use of time. Several modern recovery systems such as

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>35</sup> Often, these select men and women were personally selected by John Wesley.

<sup>36</sup> Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *John Wesley: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1978), 27. Tuttle notes that on June 28, 1799, Wesley’s eighty-fifth birthday, he journaled his attendance with a select society.

<sup>37</sup> Henderson, *A Model for Making Disciples*, 125.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 19. “One of the most demoralizing vices of the poor was wide-spread alcoholism, even among the children. In 1736, every sixth house in London was licensed as a grogshop. Gin consumption topped eleven million gallons a year in England alone.”

Alcoholics Anonymous and Celebrate Recovery have benefitted from Wesley's penitent band model.

While all levels of Christian conferencing were a vital means of grace for Wesley's Methodists, the class meeting was the engine that drove the movement. Through trial and error with various forms of groups, Wesley came to believe that the class meeting was the heart of Christian community and vital to growing in Christlikeness. It became the method of Methodism. Once this was thoroughly tested through experience and confirmed as effective for producing fruitful disciples, Wesley would implore his followers, "Never omit meeting your class or band. . . . These are the very sinews of our Society. And whatever weakens or tends to weaken our regard for these, or our exactness in attending them, strikes at the very root of our community."<sup>39</sup>

Wesley's discipleship methods were highly structured and systematically designed. Each Methodist society was divided into smaller groups of up to twelve people. Each class met weekly, with a designated leader who was responsible to give direction to the class meetings and to ensure the pastoral care of each of its members, especially new believers. Each society member was required to attend a class meeting. Failure to do so over a period of time meant expulsion from the society. One paragraph from Wesley's *Rules for the United Societies*, written in 1744, outlines the agenda for every class meeting and the job description of each leader:

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<sup>39</sup> John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, eds. Randy L. Maddox and Paul W. Chilcote (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2015), 142-143. Wesley's *Plain Account* underwent several revisions during his lifetime, the last edit recognized by most scholars to be 1777.

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies called “classes,” according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in every class, one of who is styled the Leader. It is his business: (1) To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor; (2) To meet the minister and the stewards of the society once a week; to pay to the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding; and to show their account of what each person has contributed.<sup>40</sup>

There are several points to clarify here. First, each class was established based on where a person lived and not on their personal interests, age, gender, social standing, or level of spiritual maturity. They were small neighborhood groups from mixed backgrounds and capacities. Second, while Wesley used the masculine pronoun to describe the group leader, women were often leaders of class meetings, including a number of women preachers, an atypical arrangement for the time.<sup>41</sup> Third, people were in class to ask questions regarding the spiritual progress of each member. They were not there for Bible studies or Christian education, that was reserved for the societies. They were there to ask the question, “How goes it with your soul?” or, as Methodist theologian Elaine Heath and Methodist historian Scott Kisker have recently rephrased the question, “How is your life with God?”<sup>42</sup> Fourth, there was an expectation that each person would give what they could in support of the poor.<sup>43</sup> The members were not allowed to become

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<sup>40</sup> John Wesley, “The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies,” in *The Works of John Wesley, Bicentennial Edition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989), 9:69-70.

<sup>41</sup> Knight and Powe, *Transforming Community*, Kindle Location 363.

<sup>42</sup> Elaine A. Heath and Scott J. Kisker, *Longing for Spring: A New Vision for Wesleyan Community* (2010): 34, quoted in Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2014), 25.



insulated from the social ills outside the walls of their class meeting. Rather, they were called to an ethical and compassionate response that holiness of heart and life demanded.<sup>44</sup> In so doing, they also fulfilled the General Rules of a Methodist: “to do no harm; to do good to both the bodies and souls of their neighbors; and attend upon the ordinances of God.”<sup>45</sup> The class leader would then follow up with society leadership to give a full report of what had happened in the meeting, the spiritual needs of the members, and to deliver the funds collected for the poor.

The class meeting was so central to Methodist life and practice, attendance continued to be a formal requirement in the Methodist Episcopal Church for several decades.<sup>46</sup> For a period of time, Methodists issued class meeting tickets to people quarterly. The tickets were used to gain admittance into the larger worship services.<sup>47</sup> While the class meeting had a great impact on the Methodists in Great Britain, its greatest results were in American Methodism. In 1776, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians dominated the religious scene of colonial America, with a combined 55 percent of all religious adherents.<sup>48</sup> Methodists, a very small sect in 1776, accounted for a

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<sup>43</sup> Hempton, *Methodism*, Kindle Locations 1041-1048.

<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that the first official experiment with a class meeting was a capital campaign to help pay off a building debt in Bristol.

<sup>45</sup> Knight and Powe, *Transforming Community*, Kindle Locations 387-400.

<sup>46</sup> Watson, *The Class Meeting*, 28.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>48</sup> Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 55.

minuscule 2.5 percent of colonial church life, with a meager sixty-five churches.<sup>49</sup> By 1850, just seven decades later, the Methodists were the largest denomination in the United States with 13,302 congregations, representing more than one-third of all American church members.<sup>50</sup>

Many factors contributed to what Roger Finke and Rodney Stark have called “the meteoric rise of Methodism.”<sup>51</sup> Two of the most important factors include the missionary spirit of Methodists to break down socioeconomic and racial barriers,<sup>52</sup> and the prominent place of the doctrine of entire sanctification in the preaching, teaching, and experience of the people.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, scholars agree that underneath these factors for the Methodists’ surprising success in colonial, and later frontier, America is the implicit

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Led by the uncompromising John Wesley, the majority of British and American Methodists were vehemently opposed to slavery and active in the struggle against it. It is widely believed that the last letter written by John Wesley was to William Wilberforce to encourage him in the anti-slavery fight in England. As a result, the Methodists and the Baptists were the most welcoming to native-born African-Americans. Black Methodist pastors were supported and black Methodist laypersons were encouraged to take leadership roles. The support given to the African-American community caused an explosion of growth in Methodism. By 1851 the Methodist Episcopal Church enjoyed a membership of 7.8 percent of all adult blacks in the United States (Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*, 101). One of the most powerful witnesses to this racial acceptance came from Richard Allen, a free African-American Methodist preacher from Philadelphia. He believed that Methodism, as opposed to other American denominations, “provided the personal discipline and reform needed for people being held in bondage” (Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*, 104, emphasis added). Nash states, “To Allen and other black Methodists leaders it seemed a perfect system for lifting up an oppressed people” (Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community 1720-1840* [1988]: 193, quoted in Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*, 104, emphasis added).

<sup>53</sup> C.C. Goss, *Statistical History of the First Century of American Methodism* (1866): 162-186, quoted in Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*, 113-116. The reasons for the success of the “Methodist Miracle” were outlined in great detail by Goss on the occasion of the celebration of one hundred years of Methodism.

impact of the class meetings on the laity of American Methodists. Kevin Watson maintains:

[Because] every Methodist throughout this period was expected to participate in a weekly class meeting, a strong case can be made that the class meeting was the single most important factor of early Methodism and to the retention of converts within Methodism. People who had come to faith in Christ were immediately placed in a class meeting, where they would be helped to grow in their faith and where they could learn how to practice their faith.<sup>54</sup>

Watson continues, Wesley felt that “if the class meeting was threatened, then the ‘very root’ (Wesley’s phrase) was in danger.”<sup>55</sup> The concern was warranted and proved to be true. While no specific time can be pinpointed, historians agree that the Methodist class meeting in the United States began its decline in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup> Timothy Smith observes: “The urgent appeals of leaders in the American Holiness Movement for their revival indicates that in many *urban congregations* class meetings were either moribund or extinct.”<sup>57</sup>

Contributing factors to the decline of the class meeting have been postulated, including upward mobility among Methodism’s members, busier lives in urban settings, and the rise of the Sunday school.<sup>58</sup> The popularity of Sunday school is a legitimate argument for the atrophy of the class meeting. The Sunday school movement, for all the good it provided, began to replace the accountability of the class meeting with

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<sup>54</sup> Watson, *The Class Meeting*, 22.

<sup>55</sup> Watson, *The Class Meeting*, 27.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, “Nazarenes and the Wesleyan Mission,” 7-10.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, emphasis added.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-10.

information-based Christian education led by a teacher. Phoebe Palmer added a popular new institution to urban Methodism called the Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness. It began in New York City in 1836, but by mid-century, it had spread to hundreds of towns and cities across the country, and the prayer meeting began to supersede the class meeting. There were also the ministers' weekly prayer meetings in cities and the increasing expansion of the camp meeting to be attended.<sup>59</sup> In short, with the swelling menu of options that came with the American holiness movement, the class meeting became optional. It is not a coincidence that as American Methodism "began to distance itself from the class meeting, its growth also began to decrease, then stop, and finally decline."<sup>60</sup>

What happened in people's lives in the atmosphere of a class meeting was significant. To remove a primary means of grace, by which Wesleyan-Holiness Christians cultivated their pursuit of holiness, without replacing it with a new form has not been without consequence. The genius of Wesley's small group organization of authenticity, accountability, support, and care remains a missing piece in many congregations today. People thrive in high trust networks of holy love. The class meeting's purpose is vital to sustaining urban church planting in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>60</sup> Watson, *The Class Meeting*, 31, 151. "A variety of other explanations can also be seen to account for the numerical decline of Methodism over the last several decades. I am not making a formal academic argument here. Nevertheless, the decline of the class meeting is frequently included by historians of Methodism as at least a factor in the broader decline of American Methodism, if not the most important factor."

## **Wesleyan-Holiness Spiritual Formation: Works of Mercy and the Poor**

Wesley's emphasis on ministry to the poor is well documented. The class meetings received regular offerings for the poor as an act of compassion and a practice of Christian stewardship. However, it is important to stress that Wesley believed working with and among the poor is not merely an act of compassion, but is a necessary aspect of the spiritual formation of every Christian. Thus, Wesley maintained that living with the poor is a work of mercy and a work of piety.

Wesley believed the gospel was good news to the poor. He made a practice of “visiting the poor as a *spiritual discipline*, and encouraged—indeed, insisted—that his Methodists do the same.”<sup>61</sup> Even as an elderly man, Wesley risked his own health and well-being in the cold of winter, trudging through ankle-deep snow, to go publicly begging for funds on behalf of the suffering.<sup>62</sup> Theodore Jennings elaborates, “[E]very aspect of Methodism was subjected to the criterion, how will this benefit the poor?”<sup>63</sup> However, it was more than concern for the comfort of the poor that motivated Wesley; it was vitally important to him because he saw no other way to understand or identify with the poor than to be among them.<sup>64</sup> For that reason, Wesley believed it was far better “to *carry* relief to the poor, than to *send* it,” because of the spiritual impact it would have on

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<sup>61</sup> Lovett H. Weems, Jr. *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 47, emphasis added.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., “Wesley’s Preferential Option for the Poor,” *Quarterly Review* 9 (1989): 16.

<sup>64</sup> Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley’s Evangelical Economics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 54.

the one bringing the help.<sup>65</sup> Jennings further asserts that this regular practice of visitation was not mere sympathy or sentimentalism, but that for Wesley, “visiting the poor and sick and imprisoned was a *means of grace*, to be ranked alongside private and public prayer or *the sacraments themselves*.”<sup>66</sup>

Randy Maddox points out that many contemporary writers on Wesleyan spirituality view works of mercy “mainly as ways in which we express our spirituality and not ways in which we develop it.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, Wesley’s understanding of ministry to and with the marginalized poor, sick, and imprisoned was more than compassion; as a means of grace for the Christian, it is indispensable to Wesleyan spirituality. These acts of mercy become the ways by which God works to establish the character of holiness in God’s people and to give growth in grace toward the recovery of the divine image. Benefiel summarizes, “[F]or us to grow in Christlikeness, as God intended, we must engage in activities through which God’s mercy is conveyed to others.”<sup>68</sup>

Emphasis on the poor as a means of grace began to wane after Wesley’s death and as Methodism matured. Nathan Hatch observes that by the 1840s American Methodists were not only the largest Protestant denomination in the country, but like their Presbyterian and Congregationalists counterparts, had begun their own journey toward

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<sup>65</sup> John Wesley, *Journal* (November 24, 1760), *Works* (Jackson), 3:28.

<sup>66</sup> Jennings, *Good News to the Poor*, 54, emphases added.

<sup>67</sup> Randy L. Maddox, “Visit the Poor: John Wesley, the Poor, and the Sanctification of Believers” in *The Poor and the People Called Methodists, 1729-1999*, ed. Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 64.

<sup>68</sup> Benefiel, “Our Wesleyan Tradition,” 13.

the “inevitable allure of respectability.”<sup>69</sup> They were no longer the newcomer marginalized sect to American soil; Methodists had become successful businessmen, bankers, politicians, and educators. Methodist church buildings began to change to accommodate the newly acquired affluence. Pipe organs and stained glass windows were installed in Methodist sanctuaries. Soon followed the practice of pew rentals, a way to raise congregational funds to pay for elaborate facilities, but also which further segregated the more prestigious Methodist members from other church members. Even the teaching of the doctrine of entire sanctification began to diminish to make room for more progressive ethical concerns.

Wesley was well aware of the danger of riches. He recognized that the life of holiness would lead to an increased social standing and economic prosperity. When people become industrious, disciplined, responsible, and honest they will be set apart from the masses, particularly in an industrialized society, and material success will soon follow.<sup>70</sup> Sociologists have characterized this phenomenon as redemption and lift.<sup>71</sup> While Wesley predicted the vulnerability, and although he preached a number of sermons on the corrupting power of riches, he was less concerned that Methodists would become wealthy, and more concerned that in their newly found societal elevation they would neglect their calling to the common man.<sup>72</sup> His fears proved to be true. Slowly, the rising

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<sup>69</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 127.

<sup>70</sup> Jennings, *Good News to the Poor*, 135.

<sup>71</sup> McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 295

refinement of the Methodists began to alienate them from the people early Methodism had been so careful to include.

The changing atmosphere did not go unnoticed. Prominent Methodists began to speak out against the injustice. In an effort not to lose this vital connection with the poor, outspoken leaders like B.T. Roberts (Free Methodists), William Booth (Salvation Army), and, later, Phineas Bresee began to call for a recapturing of the original vision for the poor. Bresee left a distinguished ecclesiastical career to return to his passion of ministry to and with the poor. Nazarene church buildings and formal dress were intentionally made less pretentious and more simplified so that the poor would feel welcome and comfortable. Bresee's passion for the poor was so keenly felt that he wrote to the first Nazarenes, "The evidence of the presence of Jesus in our midst is that we bear the gospel, particularly to the poor."<sup>73</sup> While Bresee's care for the poor may have been partially influenced by the post-millennialist eschatology of his day, he recognized it as a necessary aspect of true religion and faithful discipleship.

Donald Dayton contends that while Wesley's move toward the poor was central to his Christian praxis, he did not ground it in a confessional theological dogma. According to Dayton, Wesley's followers in the American Holiness Movement "more clearly articulated a theological grounding for the Wesleyan option for the poor and *made it*

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<sup>72</sup> Richard M. Cameron, *Methodism and Society in Historical Perspective* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), 73.

<sup>73</sup> P.F. Bresee, "Nazarene Messenger," December 31, 1901.



*constitutive of the Gospel.*”<sup>74</sup> For the American holiness leaders, “one cannot know and serve Jesus Christ without friendship with the poor.”<sup>75</sup>

Compassionate acts that serve the poor and oppressed are an important part of engaging in Christ’s incarnational ministry and advancing the kingdom of God.

Additionally, what God will accomplish in these interactions is also a means of grace for every believer. Discipleship in Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology depends on the pursuit of Christlikeness and ministry to and with the marginalized. These practices of the Christian life “are not simply duties, they are also gracious means that God has provided to free us to become progressively the kind of people that we really long to be.”<sup>76</sup>

### **Isaiah 11 as Paradigm for Wesleyan-Holiness Ecclesiology in Urban Contexts**<sup>77</sup>

Much has been written in recent biblical studies regarding the importance of literary genres and their rhetorical function. Genre refers to the form of the literature; rhetorical function refers to how the genre is intended to be used literarily, or “what a particular genre is designed to do in the reading process.”<sup>78</sup> For example, in the literary

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<sup>74</sup> Donald Dayton, “Liberation Theology in the Wesleyan and Holiness Tradition,” *Online Journal of Public Theology*, <http://www.pubtheo.com/page.asp?pid=1111> (accessed October 25, 2017), emphasis in original.

<sup>75</sup> Carder, “What Difference Does Knowing Wesley Make?,” 29.

<sup>76</sup> Maddox, “Visit the Poor,” 81.

<sup>77</sup> I first presented the content of this section in the keynote address at the John A. Knight Bible and Theology Conference, Mount Vernon Nazarene University, February 2012. The title of the keynote was “Lions, Lambs, and the New Creation: An Exploration of the Eschatological Vision of Isaiah 11 for the Church.”

<sup>78</sup> Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 24-25.

genre of letters, a letter of resignation has a different purpose than a letter of recommendation. There are different forms of letters with various rhetorical functions, including forms within the form. A newspaper is a form of literature that has distinctive and separate rhetorical functions. There are headlines and editorials, obituaries and box scores, crosswords and weather reports. While they are all in the form of a newspaper, these forms within the form have different functions, and must be read in light of those specific purposes.

Reading the literary genres of scripture with an eye toward form and function helps to ensure exegetical accuracy. The Nazarene Articles of Faith affirm that the sixty-six books of the Christian Scriptures are “given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation.”<sup>79</sup> However, the forms Scripture takes to express this purpose are rich and varied. There are narratives and poems, historical records and genealogies, law and wisdom, songs and letters, prophets and gospels. And there are forms within the form: thanksgiving, lament, ascent, and royal psalms. All of them compose the Psalter, but each with different rhetorical functions intended to elicit different responses from the hearer or reader. To read a lament psalm with the same literary lens as a thanksgiving psalm would miss the power of the inspired Word’s intent.

The literary form of Isaiah 11 (see verses 1-10 in appendix) contains both prophetic and apocalyptic elements. Prophetic literature is more than foretelling or prediction; it is forth-telling and declarative. Additionally, apocalyptic literature is far

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<sup>79</sup> Church of the Nazarene, *Manual: 2017-2021*.

more than end-time projections. James K.A. Smith notes that the point of apocalyptic literature is, “unveiling the realities around us for what they really are.”<sup>80</sup> Eugene Peterson suggests, “the task of apocalyptic imagination is to provide images that show us what is going on in our lives” with the power “to wake us up” to what is perhaps hidden, but most real.<sup>81</sup>

With these purposes in mind, the two-fold rhetorical function of prophetic/apocalyptic genres is to offer hope for the future and to serve as a paradigm for living today. It does not deny the reality of the way things are, but looks with hope to the way things will be. Biblical theologians have described this apocalyptic viewpoint as the already and not yet kingdom of God.<sup>82</sup> It is a call to a particular way for God’s people to order their lives today, according to the way God will cause all things to be one day. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10).<sup>83</sup> To paraphrase, the life of the Christian community now is a foretaste of heaven on earth.

The Greek word *eschaton* means “last things” or “end times” or “the climax of history.”<sup>84</sup> A Christian, therefore, is someone who lives today based on what they know

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<sup>80</sup> James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 92.

<sup>81</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), xii and 145-146.

<sup>82</sup> A phrase first attributed to Reformed theologian and Princeton professor, Gerhardus Vos.

<sup>83</sup> All Scripture quoted is from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>84</sup> Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 220

will be true tomorrow. This is a distinctive Wesleyan-Holiness view of living eschatologically. The apostle Paul alludes to this in the beginning of his epistle to the Ephesians (Eph 1:13-14). As God's children, we have been given a rich inheritance by which we can live in light of today. The basis of this hope is not just a future projection, but the *arrabon*, the down payment, a foretaste of heaven that can be experienced now. "Thus, the Spirit-endowed church stands within the present age as a sign of what is to come, already prefiguring the redemption for which it waits."<sup>85</sup>

Reflecting on this concept, Alan Hirsch proposes that spiritual leadership in the already and not yet kingdom means that we must learn to "manage from the future."<sup>86</sup> Hirsch goes on, "This means placing ourselves in the new future and then taking a series of steps, not in order to get there someday, but as if you are there, or almost there, now . . . We are called to act in the knowledge that is already here *now* and yet will be completed *then*."<sup>87</sup> With these foundational aspects of the literary function of Isaiah 11 defined, there are several key ecclesial elements of the prophetic vision that inform a Wesleyan-Holiness approach to ministry in the urban context.

The prophetic vision of Isaiah is a portrayal of God's perfect intention for life in the Christian community, an ecclesiological description of what the Church is called to be like today. The symbolic nature of apocalyptic language means that the language

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<sup>85</sup> Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), Kindle Location 705.

<sup>86</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 234. Hirsch is quoting business management specialist, Richard T. Pascale.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, emphases in original.

employed is poetry, not prose. This does not mean, however, that the symbols are not reality. The apocalyptic symbolism “points to actual, though transcendent, reality, so the language can be called ‘literal non-literalism.’”<sup>88</sup> Further, the apocalyptic language employs “[a]nimals, colors, numbers, and other everyday entities”<sup>89</sup> to “take on symbolic value to express the nearly inexpressible.”<sup>90</sup> The animals mentioned in this text (leopards, goats, oxen, lions, and lambs) can symbolize different kinds of people. They are metaphors of what God’s new creation will look like when the entire world comes under the lordship of Jesus Christ. It has the rhetorical function of offering hope because it tells us what will be in God’s new creation. Also, it has the rhetorical function of paradigm, because it is an invitation to order our lives today in Christian community according to the way things will one day be for the whole world.

Isaiah 11 is a prototype of what the church is called to be and do. The animals can be viewed as metaphors for the people of God. The messianic vision is a vivid depiction of what God’s perfected new creation will look like when the entire world comes under the lordship of Jesus Christ, the fruitful Branch from the stump of Jesse. Isaiah’s vision of a “peaceable kingdom”<sup>91</sup> is a compelling snapshot of what God’s shalom, peace, completeness, fullness, and wholeness look like when God’s kingdom begins to break in.

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<sup>88</sup> Attributed to John J. Collins (without reference) in Robert W. Wall, *Revelation, New International Biblical Commentary* (1991): 15, quoted in Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), Kindle Location 614.

<sup>89</sup> Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, Kindle Location 541.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Edward Hicks, Quaker minister and artist, coined this phrase for his first rendition of a painting on Isaiah 11 in 1834. He eventually produced 61 re-creations of the first painting.

It is important to note that shalom is not merely a personal state of well-being, shalom is a corporate concept. “It describes a community, not simply the interior well-being of an individual or a small group of people. Shalom captures the well-being of an entire society.”<sup>92</sup> This is reflected in God’s call through Jeremiah to work for the shalom of the city of Babylon. Shalom cannot be privatized, it is thoroughly public.

Some contend that Isaiah’s vision is only a description of what heaven will be like because this is not the way of the world today. Wolves do not live with lambs; leopards do not lie down with goats; calves and lions and yearlings do not coexist together. Indeed, lambs get eaten as wolves get fatter. However, if this scriptural vision is intended to be a paradigm for the way we are to construct our lives as the church today, it serves as a beautiful portrait of how God desires life to be shared among and through his people. Though not exclusively urban in nature, the affirmation of Jesus to align his ministry with the Jubilee statements of Isaiah 61 indicates his commitment to bringing the kingdom of God to earth. This kingdom, which is the shalom community in action, will “bring in its wake a grand reversal in which poverty and systems of domination will be eliminated and humanity will become all that God intended it to be.”<sup>93</sup> The church is a sign and symbol that God’s kingdom is breaking into the world (inaugurated eschatology).<sup>94</sup> In this way,

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<sup>92</sup> Robert Linthicum, *Transforming Power: Biblical Strategies for Making a Difference in Your Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 37. Shalom theology is also enriched by the writings of Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward a Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom*; Lisa Sharon Harper, *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right*; Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>94</sup> George Eldon Ladd served as a pioneer of the study of inaugurated eschatology. First published in 1974, his classic work, *A Theology of the New Testament*, became a leading voice in the rise of kingdom theology.

the church becomes both word and witness to an unbelieving world. If the church is to move toward Isaiah's vision, there are at least four ecclesial values that must exist for this communal dream to become a reality in the city.

### Inclusive Diversity

With Isaiah 11 as a framework, the first ecclesial value of Wesleyan-Holiness urban communities is inclusive diversity, or dissimilar people coming together in spite of their differences. The opposite of inclusive diversity is exclusive selectivity. When a place is exclusive, such as country clubs and gated communities, it means that only particular kinds of people are welcome there. Exclusive places are restricted by design, and require people to have similar socioeconomic backgrounds and interests. People join clubs and live in gated communities because they want to choose what kinds of friends and neighbors they will have.

An ecclesiology based on Isaiah 11 is the polar opposite from exclusive selectivity. No animal in the vision is asked to become like the other. The social environment of Isaiah 11 offers a warm embrace to every person and does not insist that everyone be alike, think alike, or act alike. Some proponents of the church growth movement suggest that for churches to grow, congregations must form themselves around homogenous units. In his book, *Understanding Church Growth*, Donald McGavran defined a homogenous unit as "a section of society in which all the members have some characteristic in common."<sup>95</sup> While McGavran's assessment may be sociologically

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<sup>95</sup> McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 69.

simpler, it is not a biblical picture of Christian community. As people come to faith in Christ and are disciplined toward Christlikeness, they must be integrated into the life of a diverse body of Christ that will not be homogeneous. To forget this basic kingdom principle can quickly lead to myopic tribalism and racial segregation. Soong-Chan Rah correctly explains:

The homogeneous unit principle yields a segregation that furthers racial conflict and alienation. Blindly adhering to the homogenous unit principle, therefore, has resulted in an American evangelicalism incapable of dealing with the reality of a growing cultural pluralism and ethnic heterogeneity. *De facto*, segregation perpetuated by the church growth movement yielded a disenfranchisement of nonwhites from the larger evangelical movement as Western, white values of success shaped American evangelicalism's perception of success. The church growth movement served the function of furthering the defining of American evangelicalism by Western, white culture.<sup>96</sup>

If churches are to be effective, especially in the urban context, the homogenous unit principle must be rejected. Soong-Chan Rah's research indicates that less than 4 percent of Christian congregations are racially integrated.<sup>97</sup> There is still much work to be done, but Isaiah's vision is clear: communities that reflect the kingdom of God cherish inclusivity. Dallas Willard notes, "God's aim in human history is the creation of an inclusive community of loving persons, with himself included as its primary sustainer and most glorious inhabitant."<sup>98</sup> Isaiah 11 does not promote homogeneity. Leopards, goats, oxen, bears, cobras, and children all co-exist together (Is 11:6-9). This snapshot of

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<sup>96</sup> Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 98.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>98</sup> Dallas Willard, "Studies in the Book of Apostolic Acts: Journey Into the Spiritual Unknown," unpublished study guide available only from the author, quoted in Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 189.



the kingdom of God breaks down all potential barriers to Christian community, including gender, class, race, age, economics, and personalities. This inclusive community does not demand everyone be analogous to be loved and accepted; nor does it require people to change their essential strengths and natural talents to fit together. Lions are still lions; lambs are still lambs. This community celebrates diversity and learns to live together without devaluing or destroying the other.

### Safe Refuge

The second ecclesial value of Wesleyan-Holiness urban communities is safe refuge. Kingdom communities must be places of spiritual, emotional, and physical protection that promote shalom. If a person visited a zoo and saw an exhibit sign that read, “Lion-Lamb Enclosure,” there would be no lambs and several overweight lions. Darwinian theories of biological evolution assert the strong get stronger and the weak get eaten. Such is the world in which we live. However, for urban communities to be Christian they must be based on relationships where natural instincts give way to new desires. Christian communities must learn new ways to live together that do not intentionally hurt or harm the other.

Lion-like people learn, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live without the taste of blood in their mouths. They begin to use their naturally powerful personalities to reinforce and strengthen the community, rather than destroy or divide it. In a not so subtle allusion to the new creation, Isaiah states, “the lion will eat straw like the ox” (Is 11:7). This community of God’s people is a place where lions become trustworthy, where lambs become vulnerable, and where new ways of co-existence are explored to sustain life

together without taking life from one another. Mildred Wynkoop describes the nature of the safety in Christian fellowship that agape provides: “The fellowship of goodwill and freedom from vindictiveness and underhanded intrigue in a community of persons whose temperaments, ideals, goals, and cultural biases are at sharp odds with each other, is the kind of thing that is amazing and winsome.”<sup>99</sup>

The use of power is an essential part of becoming safe communities. All power must be submitted to the good of the whole, and be used for the common good. Robert Linthicum defines power as “the ability, capacity, and willingness of a person, a group of people or an institution to act.”<sup>100</sup> The ability, capacity, and willingness to act are constructive or destructive based on how they are used. Linthicum suggests that there are two essential types of power: unilateral and relational.<sup>101</sup> Unilateral power is power over another person or people, and if not kept in check, can degenerate quickly into dominating power that is exercised with force and fear. Relational power is not power over another; it is power with another that is both mutual and reciprocal. Based on respect, belief in the basic dignity of the other, and the kingdom conviction that every person has something to offer to the community is the foundation of relational power. Donald Dayton alludes to a Wesleyan egalitarianism that views the Atonement is for all

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<sup>99</sup> Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, 41.

<sup>100</sup> Linthicum, *Transforming Power*, 81.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 81-83.

without distinction of status or class, and that if this were not true, as Wesley forewarned, “the character of grace may be at stake.”<sup>102</sup>

Dietrich Bonhoeffer confronted the concern about power when he wrote, “Every Christian community must realize that not only do the weak need the strong, but also the strong cannot exist without the weak. The elimination of the weak is the death of the fellowship.”<sup>103</sup> This understanding of Christian community promotes a kind of interdependence, where justice is measured by the power given to the weakest in the community. Wesleyan ecclesiology maintains that the strong need the weak and the weak need the strong. Wesley insisted that “true religion does not go from the strong to the weak, but from the weak to the strong.”<sup>104</sup> When power is mutual and reciprocal it is empowering to all. Ministry in the urban context will model this interdependence in the body of Christ.

### Authentic Life Transformation

The third ecclesial value of Wesleyan-Holiness urban communities reflected in Isaiah 11 is authentic life transformation. No matter how much a church desires to be inclusive and safe, it cannot happen unless its members are being genuinely changed. Transformation, in the Christian sense, is not the metamorphosis of lions to lambs, but a spiritual transformation of each person into the likeness of Christ. It is a change of nature,

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<sup>102</sup> Dayton, “Liberation Theology in the Wesleyan and Holiness Tradition,” 7.

<sup>103</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (New York: HarperCollins, 1954), 94.

<sup>104</sup> Wesley, *Journal* (May 25, 1786), *Works* (Jackson), 21:466.

not from the essence of who a person is, but taking the very best God-given aspects of who they are and sanctifying them for kingdom purposes.

To further expand Isaiah's metaphor, whenever lions lose the taste of blood in their mouths, it requires a major reorientation of life that can be explained as nothing short of conversion and newness of life. It is the difference between being only a lion, to being a Christ-centered, Spirit-filled lion that God can use for his glory. In a powerful analysis of the improbable rise of the early church, Alan Kreider contends:

Christian communities worked to transform the habitus of those who were candidates for membership—tinkering with their wiring, or even attempting a more far-reaching rewiring—by two means: catechesis, which rehabilitated the candidates' behavior by means of teaching and relationship (apprenticeship); and worship, the communities' ultimate counterformative act, in which the new habitus was enacted and expressed with bodily eloquence. The communities were able to attempt this rewiring because something had happened in the lives of the candidates.<sup>105</sup>

Kreider's description of how catechumens were shaped into disciples indicates that the rehabilitation of behaviors and the bodily counterformation of Christian worship were both dependent on the fact that real conversion had taken place in the hearts of the first Christians. Only through personal transformations can a collective Christian community be formed.

There is a vast difference between a collection of individuals and a community of faith. Life transformation is ultimately the distinguishing factor between ordinary community and Christian community. While this transformation involves both divine and human activity, it proceeds first and foremost from the heart of the God. Tod Bolsinger

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<sup>105</sup> Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 41.

writes, “The essence of God is the love that is shared by the Persons of the Trinity, demonstrated in Jesus Christ and poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit—and that love, when expressed by the communion of believers, transforms.”<sup>106</sup> Authentic life transformation in specific urban communities of faith will precede authentic transformation of urban communities universally.

### Healing and Wholeness

The fourth ecclesial value of Wesleyan-Holiness urban communities implicit in Isaiah 11 is healing and wholeness. The reality of Isaiah’s symbolism submits that there will be many lions and lambs entering the church with deep wounds, brokenness, and in desperate need of healing and wholeness. Not all of these wounds will be inflicted on them by others; some will be the self-inflicted consequences of bad decisions and poor choices. No matter how those hurts are derived, all need a welcoming community that will surround them with grace and offer hope in their despair.

The transformation of persons includes a very real element of healing. Ultimately, shalom is as much well-being as it is salvation. Salvation is more than forgiveness; it is freedom toward the journey to wholeness. This is not a false triumphalism that ignores authentic struggles and suffering of people. Cities are filled with people wrestling with all-consuming addictions and debilitating brokenness. There is no place in the urban context for attitudes of superiority, ideological pride, or smug platitudes about spiritual victories. Rather, the journey toward wholeness begins in confronting the personal

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<sup>106</sup> Tod Bolsinger, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 10.

struggle and the systemic evils that contribute to the brokenness of people and society.

Soong-Chan Rah observes:

The tendency to view the holistic work of the church as the action of the privileged toward the marginalized often derails the real work of true community healing. Ministry in the urban context, acts of justice and racial reconciliation require a deeper engagement with the other—an engagement that acknowledges suffering rather than glossing it over.<sup>107</sup>

Wesleyan-Holiness theology can help balance the triumphalism of the prosperity gospel and the worship of success through the necessary corrective brought by stories of struggle and suffering friends.<sup>108</sup>

Brokenness and destructive behavior are often the results of isolation from a caring community. Bonhoeffer reminds, “Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation.”<sup>109</sup> In the loneliness of city life, Wesleyan-Holiness communities invite people into accountable relationships, where they can be rescued from the dangerous waters of isolation into the healing flow of grace. The church is fulfilling its mission when it is “a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints.”<sup>110</sup> The record of the first Christians indicates that those outside of the *koinonia* were attracted by

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<sup>107</sup> Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 154.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 112.

<sup>110</sup> A quote often attributed to Abigail Van Buren, see <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/601956-the-church-is-a-hospital-for-sinners-not-a-museum>.

the way the Christians loved one another. “It remains true today that a lot of people understand the gospel by what they see in church communities . . . where there is love for God and one another, the gospel is an embodied reality.”<sup>111</sup>

The four aspects of Christian community set forth in Isaiah’s vision are a snapshot of the already, but not yet kingdom of God. Inclusive diversity, safe refuge, life transformation, and healing community are the seeds of heaven on earth. This vision is not possible through human ingenuity and striving. Isaiah prophesies it is only possible because God has raised up “the Root of Jesse” (Is 11:10) who provides the enabling grace to live that way. The messianic prophecy foretells that Jesus of Nazareth is the new branch who brings new life out of death.

The life of the Trinity creates, sustains, and renews this community and its members more and more into the likeness of the first Adam. Alan Roxburgh states:

The One who encounters us in Jesus is the God who is in relationship as Father, Son, and Spirit. God called into being a creation that reflects God’s nature. In the New Testament and in the early church, this meant forming a people into a new community that reflected in its life together the nature of God. The church was a sign, witness, and foretaste of God’s life in the future of all creation.<sup>112</sup>

The role of Wesleyan-Holiness church planters is to invite the people of God to live into this new creation of God by pointing to the vision, modeling the lifestyle, and “cultivating an environment in which this relationality of the kingdom might be experienced.”<sup>113</sup> Isaiah’s eschatological vision teaches us that human beings are hope-

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<sup>111</sup> Knight and Powe, *Transforming Community*, Kindle Location 434.

<sup>112</sup> Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 123.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

shaped creatures, meaning how we live today is completely shaped by what we believe about our future. “God’s future is not in a plan or strategy that [one] introduce[s]; it is among the people of God.”<sup>114</sup> This hopeful future must be aligned with a Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology for the city.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 145, emphasis added.



## PART THREE

### MINISTRY STRATEGY AND PRACTICE

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE IN THE URBAN CONTEXT TODAY

The Church of the Nazarene is represented in some form in most of the major metropolitan areas in the United States, but whether the work is focused on the commercial and cultural centers of the nation is less clear. Nazarene Research Services recently conducted a study of the Nazarene presence in the urban cores of the United States and Canada. Researchers Dale Jones and Rich Houseal propose that since actual urban cores are not consistently defined by any government agencies, determining how well a group, e.g., a denomination, is doing first requires the creation of a consistent definition.<sup>1</sup> Using 2013 population and housing estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, Jones and Houseal, define an urban core as less than 5 percent of the metropolitan average for housing stock in detached, individual houses, sufficient employment opportunities that the median commute time is less than 60 percent of the metropolitan average, and three times the metropolitan area's concentration of high-value housing (owned housing valued at \$1,000,000 or more; rental costs of at least \$2,000 a month).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dale Jones and Rich Houseal, "Urban Cores and the Church of the Nazarene - United States," July 2015, Nazarene Research Services.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Relatively few neighborhoods, or block groups as defined by the Census Bureau, met all three criteria. But if those that did formed a core with at least 5,000 people, additional neighborhoods were added provided they met the conditions that the neighborhoods were nearly or completely surrounded by the rest of the core; that the neighborhoods connected separate core units and contained transportation networks; that the neighborhoods connected separate core units and came close to meeting most of the core criteria; and that the addition of the neighborhoods made a more recognizable boundary (highway, city limit, shoreline, etc.).<sup>3</sup>

This definition represents one sample of what could be identified as an urban core, and there are other extended areas that could qualify as urban per se. Nonetheless, based on the definition above, Jones and Houseal identified twenty-four such areas, each with a total population of at least 20,000 people, according to 2013 estimates from the American Community Survey.<sup>4</sup> Out of these twenty-four areas, Nazarene Research Services reported ten active, organized Nazarene churches in 2014.<sup>5</sup> One additional area has a compassionate ministry center headquartered within its boundaries, though they could find no specific information on where the ministry takes place. Table 4.1 reports the urban cores assessed, the number of active Churches of the Nazarene, adherents (worship attendance), and compassionate ministries centers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Table 4.1. Nazarene churches in urban cores, 2014

Urban Core	Population	Active Churches	Adherents	CMCs
Arlington, VA	40,208			
Baltimore, MD	37,303			
Beverly Hills, CA	25,326			
Boston-Cambridge-Brookline, MA	290,514	3	262	
Chicago, IL (Downtown)	218,932	2	70	
Chicago, IL (Hyde Park-Kenwood)	32,653			
Columbus, OH	44,289			
Los Angeles, CA (Central City)	42,255			
Los Angeles, CA (West Los Angeles-Westwood)	58,183			
Milwaukee, WI	30,552			
New York, NY (Brooklyn Borough Park)	49,661			
New York, NY (Manhattan)	730,798	1	185	1
New York, NY (Morningside Heights)	34,394			
New York, NY (Williamsburg)	38,999			
Philadelphia, PA	95,840			
Pittsburgh, PA	34,096			
Portland, OR	33,870	1		
Richmond, VA	22,312			
San Diego, CA (Downtown)	27,293			
San Diego, CA (La Jolla)	38,414			
San Francisco, CA	22,555			
Seattle, WA	81,310	1	60	
Washington, DC	132,136			1
White Plains, NY	29,554	2	296	

Each of these urban cores has sufficient population for multiple Nazarene churches; however, the populations within the areas studied are not typical of most of the membership of the U.S./Canada region of the Church of the Nazarene. Jones and

Houseal's study criteria encompasses a small sample size of gentrifying urban cores that do not include lower income neighborhoods of central cities. Due to the rise of gentrification, many urban cores now have a majority of white, non-Hispanics. Of the cities studied, twenty-two have a plurality of white, non-Hispanics.<sup>7</sup> The majority of Nazarene work within these urban cores has concentrated on other cultural groups and ethnicities rather than white, non-Hispanics. Only two of the six active Nazarene churches consider their primary group to be white, English-speaking; the remaining four include multicultural or a specific ethnicity (see Table 4.2).<sup>8</sup>

Table 4.2. Ethnicities of Nazarene churches in urban cores

Urban Core	Ethnicity of Active Churches
Boston-Cambridge, MA	Cape Verdean (1); Haitian (1); Multicultural (1)
Chicago, IL (Downtown)	White/English-speaking (1); Multicultural (1)
New York, NY (Manhattan)	Multicultural (1)
Portland, OR	White/English-speaking (1)
Seattle, WA	White/English-speaking (1)
White Plains, NY	Hispanic (1); White/English-speaking (1)

Jones and Houseal purport the white, non-Hispanic population within each core is large enough to support multiple Nazarene churches.<sup>9</sup> However, other cultural factors will call for special ministry approaches within the urban cores. Because Jones and Houseal assessed neighborhoods with high housing values, the urban cores highlighted are more likely to include young singles, childless couples, LGBT, as well as progressive

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

middle-aged or early retired childless couples.<sup>10</sup> Tex Sample referred to these constituencies as the “cultural left.”<sup>11</sup> As Ron Benefiel points out, “Evangelicals on the whole have never done well with this demographic.”<sup>12</sup> Consequently, Nazarene churches in the city have been largely immigrant and compassionate ministries-based.

While limited in scope, this research sample reveals several insights into how the Church of the Nazarene is currently involved in U.S.-based urban areas. First, Nazarene churches are heavily weighted toward churches outside urban cores. Numerically and proportionately the Church of the Nazarene is having more success in greater metropolitan, suburban, and rural areas and is highly underrepresented in cities. Second, when Nazarene churches are in urban cores they are most often multicultural or multiethnic in scope. This seems to be one of the primary existing Nazarene methodologies and foci for urban church planting.<sup>13</sup> Third, more white, non-Hispanics are moving into the urban core. Many of these are single, young professionals. White-collar workers in the urban core do not automatically assume advanced education or high-income households. Gentrification cuts both ways.

These existing factors indicate that Nazarene work in the urban core remains distant from the original vision of the denomination. The Church of the Nazarene began

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<sup>10</sup> Ron Benefiel, conversation with author, October 18, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Tex Sample, *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches: A Key to Reaching People in the Nineties* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 25.

<sup>12</sup> Ron Benefiel, conversation with author, October 18, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Conn, *The American City and the Evangelical Church*, 168. “By 1988, the Church of the Nazarene had 124 organized Hispanic churches and 71 [Hispanic] mission churches [in the United States].”

with an awareness of the tension between urban and rural contexts. For any tension to exist, a pull from both polarities is needed. A recovery of the original mission and practice of the church would include locating, accepting, and celebrating the missional tension between both perspectives.

There are hopeful signs of an urban recovery in the Church of the Nazarene. Robert Broadbooks, U.S./Canada Regional Director for the Church of the Nazarene, reports that Youth In Mission teams are being sent to three cities, St. Louis, Philadelphia and Detroit.<sup>14</sup> This endeavor hopes to create an incarnational burden among young leaders to live, work, and minister in the city. The challenge, Broadbooks recognizes, is that the Church of the Nazarene is not entering these cities.<sup>15</sup> They are places where the church has vacated. In some cases, the Church of the Nazarene is re-entering or strengthening existing works.

The same Chicago First Church of the Nazarene that left the city to move to the suburbs over forty years ago recently agreed to rehabilitate an abandoned church in the Austin section of Chicago, a predominantly African-American neighborhood.<sup>16</sup> More recently, this same church expressed a vision to start a Nazarene ministry in every one of the seventy neighborhoods of urban Chicago.<sup>17</sup> This is a hopeful sign that a renewed

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Broadbooks, "Report of the USA/Canada Regional Strategy," 2015. Youth in Mission teams serve from several months to a full year.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Cunningham et al., *Our Watchword and Song*, 435.

<sup>17</sup> Brian Wilson, Chicago Central District Superintendent, conversation with author, February 2014.

ministry focus in the city is taking into account both the original vision of working with and among the poor, while also considering a fresh perspective of the new urban realities of gentrification.

Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene, the mother congregation of the denomination, has a vision to restart the English-speaking congregation that has dwindled almost to nonexistence. By 1980, the English-speaking congregation was no longer predominantly white. However, it did thrive as an ethnically/racially diverse congregation until the early 2000s. An English-speaking, Guatemalan-born pastor who grew up in the Spanish-speaking congregation at Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene, was appointed pastor of the English-speaking congregation in 2016.<sup>18</sup>

Broadbooks further reports that the Nazarene work in downtown Columbus, Ohio, is flourishing through the Lower Lights Community Church of the Nazarene.<sup>19</sup> The motto for this congregation is “a church for the city.”<sup>20</sup> Their ministries include a food pantry, Celebrate Recovery, traditional 12-Step programs, and a Saturday evening “family style” nutritious meal, prepared and served to their neighbors by church, civic, and community leaders alike.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, this church has helped establish the Lower Lights Christian

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Mata, Los Angeles First Church staff member in the 1990s, conversation with author, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Broadbooks, “Report of the USA/Canada Regional Strategy.”

<sup>20</sup> Lower Lights Church of the Nazarene, <http://www.lowerlightschurch.org> (accessed May 7, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. The Lower Lights Church of the Nazarene website describes the purpose of the family meal: “The goal of this ministry is not only to provide a hearty meal, but to provide a safe environment where socio-economic barriers can be transcended. Participants and volunteers fellowship, worship, and serve together in a way that instills respect and preserves dignity. This ministry also presents an opportunity for individuals to discover other ministries that can assist them by providing valuable resources.”



Health Center with the mission of “ministering the love of Christ as a model full-service medical home, focused on whole-person wellness, available to all in Central Ohio who need it regardless of ability to pay.”<sup>22</sup> This church/non-profit partnership effectively communicates and embodies their emphases: “home, whole person wellness, and the love of Christ.”<sup>23</sup>

The Shepherd Community Church of the Nazarene in Indianapolis also is leading the way in urban church renewal and compassionate evangelism. A quick review of the church’s website makes it difficult to determine if it is a church, a compassionate ministry center, or a community development project. Its ministries are intertwined in their purpose: “[T]o break the cycle of poverty on the near Eastside of Indianapolis by engaging and empowering the community to cultivate healthy children, strong families, and vibrant neighborhoods through a Christ-centered approach that meets the spiritual, physical, emotional, and academic needs of our neighbors.”<sup>24</sup> Shepherd Community also embraces six core values that define their approach: “[A] Christ-centered life of faith; an attitude of hope; a dedication to service; an unwavering focus on mission and purpose; a commitment to community; a desire for complete health and wholeness.”<sup>25</sup> Under the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Shepherd Community Church of the Nazarene, <http://www.shepherdcommunity.org> (accessed May 7, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

leadership of Pastor Jay Height, Shepherd Community has become a “living laboratory”<sup>26</sup> for training future ministers in the urban context.

Broadbooks confirms that there are church-sponsored Nazarene ministries underway in the ten largest cities of the U.S./Canada region: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Toronto, Houston, Montreal, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Antonio, and San Diego.<sup>27</sup> He and his church development team are working with district superintendents and pastors to assist with strengthening current works and to encourage urban church planting with training and resources. Mark Bane, Director of Evangelism Ministries and New Church Development for the U.S./Canada region, has set the goal of planting at least one Nazarene congregation in the 203 cities of 200,000 in population or more.<sup>28</sup>

### **Challenges to an Urban Future**

While the initiatives in the previous section and the strategic denominational goal are encouraging, leadership recognizes that the cultural response to church is changing. There are potential challenges that must be considered as the Church of the Nazarene returns to an urban future. If these challenges can be addressed, they may also serve as core competencies to inform the Church going forward.

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Broadbooks, “Report to the USA National Board,” February 25, 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Broadbooks, “Report of the USA/Canada Regional Strategy.”

<sup>28</sup> Mark Bane, conversation with author, February 21, 2018.

## Gentrification and Poverty

The term, gentrification, was first introduced in 1964 by Ruth Glass while studying the housing and social class changes in London. Although her initial analysis of gentrification has been updated by current urban researchers, her observations were groundbreaking to theories of urban development. Gentrification has been defined as, “the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use.”<sup>29</sup> While commercial use is identified, housing is the main discussion in most cases of gentrification.

With the rise of suburbanization and an automobile-focused society, urban-dwellers migrated out of urban centers and, in many cases, so did businesses and economic stability. “[The] people who were left in the central cities oftentimes were the ones who were not able to be as mobile. As a result . . . those left in the central cities tended to be lower-income minorities.”<sup>30</sup> All of these transitions led to a downward cycle of deterioration of neighborhoods, loss of tax revenues needed to maintain infrastructures, and many left without viable job opportunities, adequate education, or basic amenities.

Blight is an economic term that describes the conditions of urban areas that are in disrepair.<sup>31</sup> Colin Gordon suggests that blight is not synonymous with slum, but refers to

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<sup>29</sup> Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly, *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group, 2008), xv.

<sup>30</sup> Sean Benesh, *Exegeting the City* (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2015), Kindle Location 521.

<sup>31</sup> Mark R. Gornik, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), Kindle Location 2302.

the conditions that gradually result in a final condition known as a slum.<sup>32</sup> For an area to be blighted, therefore, means that eminent domain is declared in order to relocate local residents, raze buildings, and invite developers for the revitalization process of an area to begin. Gentrification is the process by which these deteriorating areas are restored.

Urban missiologist Sean Benesh identifies three significant aspects of modern American cities that have resulted from gentrifying urban cores. First, in efforts to revitalize their urban centers, many cities “are specifically, strategically, and unabashedly throwing their lot in with the creative class.”<sup>33</sup> This suggests that the key to many city strategies for revitalization is to encourage gentrification, with the explicit aim of attracting a particular socioeconomic group often referred to as the creative class, but also labeled in present-day jargon as hipsters, yupsters, and bohemians.<sup>34</sup> Second, as deindustrialization brought economic downturn to cities, the new trajectory is “towards a *creative economy*, and how this growing creative class workforce is helping to reshape cities.”<sup>35</sup> Cities are reinventing themselves “to attract people who are mobile, white-collar, and have discretionary income.”<sup>36</sup> With these new consumers come rejuvenated economic vitality, a renewed tax revenue stream, and the demand for the kind of infrastructure and lifestyle amenities this socioeconomic group is accustomed to having.

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<sup>32</sup> Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 190.

<sup>33</sup> Benesh, *Exegizing the City*, Kindle Location 587.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., emphasis added.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Coffee shops, microbreweries, bookstores, and bike paths soon follow. Human geography scholar and gentrification specialist, Loretta Lees, offers insight into the minds of contemporary city planners: “Urban revitalization strategies are aimed not just at attracting middle-class gentrifiers as resident taxpayers, but also at bringing them back to urban areas as consuming, and in that spending, visitors.”<sup>37</sup> Third, cities are transforming from manufacturing-based economies to a knowledge-based economy.<sup>38</sup> This knowledge-based economy is being driven by artists, architects, fashion designers, publishing, and tech start-up companies who value the grittiness and authenticity that the urban core has to offer.<sup>39</sup>

The gentrification effect means that cities are embracing “cultural consumption”<sup>40</sup> as the primary enticement to return to the city. Young professionals are increasingly attracted to the energy, opportunities, racial diversity, and quality of life offered by urban living. As an example, in Baltimore, the number of degree-holding young people living in the urban core increased by 92 percent between 2000-2010.<sup>41</sup> While the adult population

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<sup>37</sup> Loretta Lees, “The Ambivalence of Diversity and the Politics of Urban Renaissance: The Case of Youth in Downtown Portland, Maine,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 3 (2003): 614, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-2427.00469> (accessed January 26, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> Benesh, *Exegeting the City*, Kindle Location 628.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. The term, artisan-based economies, has also been used to describe what is being referred to here as knowledge-based economies.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., Kindle Location 641. Consumer Culture Theory is the sociological study of the consumption choices and behaviors of people to determine values and principles of belief.

<sup>41</sup> Stephanie Hanes, “The New ‘Cool’ Cities for Millennials,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 1, 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2015/0201/The-new-cool-cities-for-Millennials> (accessed January 26, 2018).

in Pittsburgh continues to decrease, from 2000-2014 the percentage of young college graduates grew by 53 percent, or almost 15,000.<sup>42</sup>

Gentrification has been helpful in some ways, but it has brought momentous challenges. It has fostered what Galster and Booza have identified as “bipolar neighborhoods,”<sup>43</sup> or neighborhoods in which very low- and very high-income groups live together. Their findings indicate that bipolar neighborhoods have been on a precipitous rise since 1970 and that, on average, bipolars have significantly greater shares of very high-income families, racial diversity, higher percentages of middle-aged persons, and an excessively elevated number of renters.<sup>44</sup> What is conspicuously absent from bipolars are middle-income groups, creating an even more exaggerated condition of bimodal income distributions.<sup>45</sup> The extreme polarities between the very rich and the working poor, living side by side, have not proven to reduce class-based prejudices, or of producing the opposite effect of upward social mobility for lower-income residents in close proximity with their wealthy, if not socially, successful neighbors.<sup>46</sup> Most of the

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<sup>42</sup> Dan Majors, “Pittsburgh’s Youth Exodus Reverses: Millennials are Being Drawn to the City,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 7, 2016, <http://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2016/08/08/Millennials-are-being-drawn-to-Pittsburg/stories/201608070226> (accessed January 26, 2018).

<sup>43</sup> George Galster and Jason Booza, “The Rise of the Bipolar Neighborhood,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 73, no. 4 (Autumn 2007): 421, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Rise-of-the-Bipolar-1-Neighborhood-Galster/61c7a0116c0066b3c32dd4efc4df7d25157501aa> (accessed January 31, 2018).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 428. Out of 2,377 neighborhoods in New York, 705 are considered “bipolars” (29.7 percent); for Los Angeles, 370 of 2,016 neighborhoods qualify as bipolar (18.4 percent).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 424. Galster and Booza’s findings indicate that the average “bipolar” neighborhood has a bimodal (if asymmetric) income distribution, with the lowest- and highest-income groups constituting almost 69 percent of the total.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 431.

higher-quality municipal services and retail establishments, e.g., coffee shops and organic grocery stores, that are generated by the presence of high-income residents are not affordable benefits for the poor even though they may be geographically accessible.

In his book on the built environment of cities, Eric Jacobsen alleges that gentrification is largely a problem of supply and demand, and that to balance the inequities that currently exist between those with sufficient means and the working poor is to simply gentrify more urban neighborhoods.<sup>47</sup> While this is an oversimplification of Jacobsen's argument, the fact remains that the issue of inequality is more than offsetting goods and services provided; it has as much to do with making a living. While the urban centers of many cities are attempting positive change, the vast majority of jobs available to the working poor are located in the suburbs. Edward Glaeser reports that about half the jobs in the largest cities in America are now located more than ten miles away from the city center.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, more than two-thirds of all manufacturing jobs currently take place outside of city limits.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Abram Lueders reminds that many residents of traditional urban neighborhoods are reverse commuters and that unless one lives in the largest and most dense cities, "American urban life is a fragmented experience."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Eric O. Jacobsen, *The Space Between: A Christian Engagement with the Built Environment* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 215-237.

<sup>48</sup> Edward Glaeser, *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 177.

<sup>49</sup> Alan Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion and the Future of the American City* (New York: Vintage, 2013), Kindle Location 521.

<sup>50</sup> Abram Lueders, "Evangelicals and the New Urbanism," *Marginalia*, entry posted April 22, 2017, <https://www.marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/evangelicals-new-urbanism/> (accessed November 15, 2017).

The long-term effects of gentrification on the urban poor are varied. Those who have been relocated through eminent domain, or who can no longer afford to live in their new economy, have migrated into still depressed urban or inner-ring suburban neighborhoods. As city cores revitalize through gentrification and the edges of suburbia continue to flourish with new housing, urban sprawl is generated, leaving “rings” of older and often deteriorating suburbs of city centers. These inner-ring suburbs are considered to be the first generation of suburbia developed after World War II.<sup>51</sup> Once newer, nicer, and well-appointed for a comfortable way of life, these neighborhoods have also undergone dramatic change. Pete Saunders reports:

From an image standpoint, [inner-ring neighborhoods] lack the vitality and energy of older urban neighborhoods, and they [have] lost much of the neighborly comfort and security that newer suburbs have since acquired. From an economic standpoint, they [have] lost middle-class residents as people move closer to the center of the metro area, or farther away. Socially and culturally, they [are] viewed as dated, even obsolete. They [have] lost their luster when luster is what sells homes and communities.<sup>52</sup>

With the intensifying push of gentrification in urban cores, these inner-ring neighborhoods are fast becoming the “catch basins for the migrating urban poor who are no longer in the central city.”<sup>53</sup> Lacking basic amenities, such as health care options, libraries, standardized schools, and adequate civic services, many of these sprawling older inner-ring suburbs are ignored by city planners, lack enforcement of building code

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<sup>51</sup> Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns* (2010): 378, quoted in Rah, *Prophetic Lament*, 87-88.

<sup>52</sup> Pete Saunders, “Inner-Ring Suburbs Could Use Some Attention,” *Forbes*, September 28, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/petesaunders1/2016/09/28/inner-ring-suburbs-could-use-some-attention/2/#47c41e846336> (accessed February 1, 2018).

<sup>53</sup> Benesh, *Exegeting the City*, Kindle Location 667.



laws, and consist of low-density housing, neglected strip malls, unkempt convenience stores, and payday loan operations.

Studies of church planting trends over the last fifteen years indicate that 75 percent of new churches were started in the suburbs.<sup>54</sup> The highest percentage of urban church planting is happening in gentrified neighborhoods. Because church planters are, according to Benesh, the creative class of the church, they are naturally drawn to plant churches in these areas.<sup>55</sup> Like-minded artisans and creatives are there, the environment is inviting, and churches are needed just as in other parts of the city. Yet, not all of those in gentrified neighborhoods are among the creative class. Gentrification is an economic conversation, and for Wesleyan-Holiness people, a spiritual one.<sup>56</sup> Decaying urban neighborhoods are not the preferred future of those who have endured the impact of blight and the loss of decent living conditions. In many cases, gentrification has been an improvement. But the side effects of displacement, loss of identity, and unaffordable housing must be addressed—if not by city planners, then by the church. Justice begins with mercy.

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<sup>54</sup> Benesh, *Metrospiritual: The Geography of Church Planting* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2011), Kindle Location 1849. The study was based on the research of seven cities in the western half of the United States and Canada.

<sup>55</sup> Benesh, *Exegeting the City*, Kindle Location 999.

<sup>56</sup> Sean Benesh, “Church Planting in the City,” in *Text and Context: Church Planting in Canada in Post-Christendom*, ed. Leonard Hjalmarson (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2013), Kindle Location 3030.

## Residual Effects of the Great Reversal

Early Nazarenes' concern for society, affirmation of historic Church traditions, regard for education, and tolerance for diversity of thinking and practices combined to give them an optimistic view of transformation. These deeply held convictions led them to believe that the culture could be changed by the grace of God. Thus, their twofold missional purpose of spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land and ministry to and among the poor was not merely a strategy—it was a calling. However, with the Great Reversal came a different perspective of both the world and the possibilities of real cultural change.

Pessimism and fear replaced optimism and hope. The culture felt threatening to the life of faith. The concern of worldly contamination made them apprehensive. As David Moberg points out, “Nazarene leaders who had been strongly sympathetic to the labor movement became antipathetic toward it after World War I. Their social welfare work suffered from steadily increasing neglect. When pronouncements were made on social issues, they were buried in committee reports dealing with church members’ standards of personal behavior.”<sup>57</sup> When a church struggles to decide if the gospel has the power to change society or if it is best to be removed from the mess, cities and the people who live in them become the casualty.

A survey among Nazarene pastors and laypersons revealed that one-third of them grew up in a small town, and almost the same percentage was raised in a rural area.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Moberg, *The Great Reversal*, 30.

<sup>58</sup> Kenneth E. Crow, “The Nazarene Listening Post” (paper presented to Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, 1986) cited by Best, “The Urban Imperative,” 15.

Urban ministry strategist, David Best, observes, “Our denomination [The Church of the Nazarene] was founded in an overwhelmingly rural country, but had most of its churches in America’s urban areas. Today, the United States is essentially an urbanized nation, but the majority of our churches are in small towns and rural areas.”<sup>59</sup> In a report on pastors in the Church of the Nazarene, sociologist Kenneth Crow reported that by 1996, half of all Nazarene churches and pastors were serving small towns or rural areas.<sup>60</sup> Further, research indicates that three out of five new Nazarene ministers begin their pastoral ministry in rural areas and towns with fewer than 10,000 people.<sup>61</sup> The nurturing of so many church leaders in small towns and the rural heartland contributes to a continued misunderstanding of the city. While anti-city sentiments contradict the belief that the whole gospel is for the whole world, the mindset still pervades the thinking of some in the church today, causing them to wonder if a return to the cities is worth the investment. The Great Reversal’s hegemony is resilient.

### The Separation of Evangelism and Social Reform

Closely aligned with the residual effects of the Great Reversal is the unwarranted separation between personal evangelism and social reform rooted in the modernist-fundamentalist controversies of the 1920-30s. Today this division could be expressed as

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<sup>59</sup> David M. Best, “The Urban Imperative,” unpublished book commissioned by the Church of the Nazarene Mission Strategy - United States/Canada, 36.

<sup>60</sup> Kenneth E. Crow, “The Corps of Pastors of the Church of the Nazarene” (paper presented to Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, 1996), cited by Best, “The Urban Imperative,” 36.

<sup>61</sup> Kenneth E. Crow, “Clergy Preparation from the Perspective of Recent Additions to the Nazarene Ministerial Corps” (paper presented to Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, 1990) cited by Best, “The Urban Imperative,” 36.

the conservative-liberal debate. Political conservatism is often linked to evangelical faith and soul-winning; political liberalism is often linked to concerns for the disenfranchised and tax increases for government welfare programs. The first emphasizes the spiritually-minded next world; the second emphasizes the physically-minded here and now.<sup>62</sup> This false dichotomy has caused some urban ministers to be classified as a special interest group independent of the real mission of the Church. However, from its inception, the Church of the Nazarene has maintained a more holistic vision of salvation and redemption.

Kenneth Collins reiterates the notion that in faithfulness to their theological legacy, Wesleyan-Holiness denominations will be marked by two key characteristics. First, “[a] no-nonsense emphasis on conversion, resulting in a distinctively holy life.”<sup>63</sup> Roger Olson corroborates this conviction by adding, “Conversion, regeneration [and] sanctification are the meat and potatoes of Wesleyanism.”<sup>64</sup> Second, “Wesleyans will be characterized by a stress on social action that will be informed not only by the needs of the poor, but also by a keen awareness of the danger of riches.”<sup>65</sup>

Evangelism and compassion are not mutually exclusive. Nazarenes have a broader theological vision that believes saving a person’s soul while ignoring the plight

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<sup>62</sup> This was the essence of Gnosticism, one of the earliest Christian heresies. The Gospel of John and Johannine Epistles were written, in part, to combat this separation.

<sup>63</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, *Power, Politics, and the Fragmentation of Evangelicalism: From the Scopes Trial to the Obama Administration* (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 2012), 113.

<sup>64</sup> Roger E. Olson, “The World Its Parish: Wesleyan Theology in the Postmodern Global Village,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 59, no. 1 (2004): 23.

<sup>65</sup> Collins, *Power, Politics, and the Fragmentation of Evangelicalism*, 113.

and cause of their suffering is neither just nor Christian. Jesus' first recorded sermon was an announcement of freedom from spiritual captivity and a confrontation of the systems of the world that imprison people created in the image of God (Lk 4:18-19). The uniting of both is the message of jubilee. In the spirit of jubilee, the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition has a long and fruitful history of both revivalism and social reform, and as such pursues the call to work for the shalom of all creation, including the welfare of the city.

### National Politics and Social Concerns

Closely related to the unwarranted separation of evangelism and social reform are the political affiliations of a denomination's members. The union of three different groups to form the Church of the Nazarene at Pilot Point was to promote the biblical doctrine of holiness. At the same time, nearly thirty other prominent groups in America held this same conviction. The reason these three groups could merge to form a new denomination, while the others did not, was based on several shared ideas: the strong affirmation of the ordination of women; a baptismal theology that included infant and believer's baptism without demanding a specific mode for baptism be observed; the willingness to allow for freedom of conscience regarding millennial theories; a view of divine healing that did not exclude modern medicine; a shared believers' church ecclesiology.<sup>66</sup> While many other holiness denominations held exclusive and narrow

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<sup>66</sup> Stan Ingersol, "Born in Hope, Borne Onward in Love" (paper presented to the Fraternal Delegates Luncheon, 29<sup>th</sup> General Assembly for the Church of the Nazarene, Indianapolis, Indiana, June 26, 2017).

viewpoints on these issues, the Church of the Nazarene chose to unite holiness people around middle way, or via media, practices.<sup>67</sup>

An extraordinary aspect of the union at Pilot Point was that the newly formed Church of the Nazarene was able to do what few other evangelical churches were able to achieve in the divisive years that followed the American Civil War—overcome issues of regional politics, prejudice, and the lingering hatred that follows horrific conflict. Names like Bresee, Jernigan, and Reynolds came together from north, south, and east to embrace a transformational idea: Christian holiness can break down any walls of separation.<sup>68</sup> It was a movement of the Holy Spirit rarely seen in post-Civil War America. Stan Ingersol summarizes the miracle of Pilot Point:

The union of churches at Pilot Point was a shining example of the social reality of Christian holiness. At the heart of the Christian message is a word of reconciliation: first between sinners and Divine Love; and second, among the members of the human family who are estranged from one another. Pilot Point signifies the reality that holiness heals hearts and unites people otherwise driven apart by sin, politics, and conflict.<sup>69</sup>

The remarkable capacity to set aside strongly held partisan beliefs for the greater mission of the church meant that in the earliest days of the Church of the Nazarene there was an uncommon tolerance for a wide-ranging spectrum of political affiliations. Political orientations were not aligned with specific political parties, as much as the social issues of their day.

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<sup>67</sup> David A. Busic, “The Point of Pilot Point,” *Board of General Superintendent’s Newsletter*, February 2018, <https://transformtheglobe.com/2018/04/13/the-point-of-pilot-point/> (accessed March 15, 2018).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ingersol, “Born in Hope, Borne Onward in Love.”

Since many early Nazarenes were working with the addicted on Skid Row, they aligned themselves politically as prohibitionists.<sup>70</sup> They believed that alcohol had become the root of all social ills, not because they believed drinking to be a sin, but because of the destruction of people and families that alcohol left in its wake.<sup>71</sup> They stood against alcohol and in solidarity with the people to whom they ministered. Early Nazarenes were opposed to child slavery and other forms of low-income impoverishment of those in industrial jobs at the turn of the century.<sup>72</sup> They stood with pro-labor movements, unions, and those fighting for livable wages. Their political orientations were informed by their theological orientation and the mission to which they felt called. This was an expression of their doctrine of holiness—there is no personal holiness without social holiness.

For many in the church, the social gospel wars changed that perspective. Nazarenes began to distance themselves from perceived liberal ideas and agendas. When Nazarenes moved to the suburbs they were de facto further away from urban plight and people in obvious need. They began to vote based on social policies that benefited their new way of life.<sup>73</sup>

Today, the vast majority of Nazarenes in the United States would align with the Republican Party.<sup>74</sup> Positive ethical reasons for this affiliation are anti-abortion, pro-

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<sup>70</sup> Cunningham et al., *Watchword and Song*, Kindle Locations 1548-1561, 4573.

<sup>71</sup> Nees, “The Holiness Social Ethic and Nazarene Urban Ministry,” 40.

<sup>72</sup> B.F. Haynes, “Reformation Versus Transformation,” *Herald of Holiness* (March 12, 1913): 4, cited by Nees, “The Holiness Social Ethic and Nazarene Urban Ministry,” 31-32.

<sup>73</sup> Cunningham et al., *Watchword and Song*, Kindle Locations 7141-7220.

<sup>74</sup> Corwin E. Smidt, *Pulpit and Politics: Clergy in American Politics at the Advent of the Millennium* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), 174, 177. In a recent survey, American Nazarene

marriage, and religious freedoms, while other less compelling positions that often alienate the people who choose to or are forced to live in cities include anti-immigration, pro-guns, pro-capital punishment, and higher tax cuts for the wealthy. This tension leaves American Nazarenes in a quandary of how to respond to the social issues of the gospel. Evangelicalism, in particular, has been more closely associated with the fundamentalist-leaning religious right and the accompanying temptation to wed nationalism with faith. This alluring temptation must be resisted by Wesleyan-Holiness people whose first allegiance is to Christ; they must steadfastly challenge any reading of Scripture or cultural ethic that would undermine faithfulness to the middle way that holds evangelism and compassion in proper tension. As William Kostlevy points out, “Neo-fundamentalist historical categories distort the character of evangelicalism and, more significantly, obscure the important links between historic perfectionistic revivalism and . . . twentieth-century reform movements.”<sup>75</sup> The impact of the Church of the Nazarene in the urban context will be partially determined by how well Nazarenes can hold in balance national politics and the work of the kingdom of God.

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clergy were polled regarding their political positions. Two-thirds of those surveyed indicated that they were opposed to big government and had no desire to see it “more actively engaged in solving social problems.” Further, eighty-seven percent of these ministers identified themselves as politically conservative, 10 percent as moderate, and 4 percent as liberal. Ninety percent of these ministers voted for George W. Bush in the 2000 presidential election.

<sup>75</sup> William Kostlevy, *Holiness Manuscripts: A Guide to Sources Documenting the Wesleyan Holiness Movement in the United States and Canada* (1994): 40, quoted in Kenneth Collins, *Power, Politics, and the Fragmentation of Evangelicalism*, 114.



## The Culture of Affluence

The cardinal Wesleyan belief that the poor are a means of grace is one remedy to the middle-class ethos that now permeates much of the Church of the Nazarene in the United States. Stan Ingersol remarks, “The culture of affluence insulates middle-class people in the Western world from the poor.”<sup>76</sup> Ingersol then ponders, “Has affluence posed the truest test of our Christian character? Is the real crisis over holiness theological in nature, or is it, instead, the temptation to selfishness and a failure of costly discipleship?”<sup>77</sup>

Reflecting on his own denomination, Bishop Kenneth Carder laments that the poor are absent from most local churches and ecclesial structures, and that when they are visible they are treated more as objects of charity than as friends who can help guide the affluent to a closer identification with Jesus.<sup>78</sup> He calls this “a profound theological and ecclesial crisis for United Methodism.”<sup>79</sup> Carder’s remedy to the crisis is to rediscover the poor as a means of grace. “Renewed relationships with the impoverished may be the means of evangelizing the affluent and breaking the idolatrous grip of the consumerist market logic to which middle-class North American Methodism has fallen captive.”<sup>80</sup> Modern urban dwellers often talk about compassion in sentimental and trendy ways, but

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<sup>76</sup> Ingersol, *Past and Prospect*, 18.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Carder, “What Difference Does Knowing Wesley Make?,” 30.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

Wesleyan-Holiness theology calls for the kind of engagement that is mutually beneficial to spiritual formation.

### The Complexity of Social Systems

The first Nazarenes engaged in the intertwined endeavors of personal and social transformation. Holistic in theology and practice, urban ministry among the early Nazarenes led to a pattern of comprehensive social ministries and political engagement that was the “most distinctive (and perhaps *defining*) characteristic of early Nazarene urban presence.”<sup>81</sup> Their fearless, if not audacious, engagement with the complexities of the systems and structures of urban society were directly related to their experience of perfect love and hopeful optimism in the power of the gospel to transform. The first General Assemblies of the fledgling denomination established entities to reflect their ultimate concerns. A General Orphanage Board and General Board of Social Welfare were inaugurated between 1911-1919.<sup>82</sup> Denominational periodicals also reflected the commitment of the church to social reform ministries, including rescue homes for unwed mothers, orphanages, storefront missions, and family-oriented congregations designed to minister to the urban poor.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Stan Ingersol, “Nazarenes and the Urban Ethos: An Exploratory Essay” (paper presented to Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, 1986), emphasis in original.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Nees, “The Holiness Social Ethic and Nazarene Urban Ministry,” chapter entitled, “Social Concerns of the Church of the Nazarene During its Formative Years (1895-1920) as Reflected in its Official Publications.”

It was not long before the focus turned from a broad commitment to social change to a narrower concentration on individualistic evangelistic soul winning. Historians note several factors that contributed to this shift, including a growing segment of Nazarene bourgeoisie, the influence of laissez-faire religious tendencies, and a diminishing national economy.<sup>84</sup> As Nazarenes became more middle-class in social standing, and more influenced by a rural mindset, denominational institutions were progressively shaped by middle-class values that became increasingly suspicious of the cultural complexity of cities that felt threatening to family ideals. Closely related, the entrepreneurial spirit inextricably bound with the first Nazarenes eventually began to reflect the spirit of the day's business practices and commercial enterprises.<sup>85</sup> As the economy of the nation began to suffer in the Great Depression,<sup>86</sup> funding for expensive ministries began to wane, resulting in less support for social impact ministries.<sup>87</sup>

Those in the rural holiness tradition were similarly engaged in social ministries, but their understanding of the solutions to societal evils differed from their urban holiness counterparts. They were more apt to focus on issues of personal morality, offering ministries of mercy to individuals they believed were suffering as a result of personal sins and bad decisions. This is illustrated in an account of Johnny Jernigan, related by Stan Ingersol, entitled, "A Long Night in the Slums."<sup>88</sup> Involved with the Nazarene Rest

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<sup>84</sup> Ingersol, *Past and Prospect*, 18.

<sup>85</sup> Ingersol, "Nazarenes and the Urban Ethos."

<sup>86</sup> The Great Depression originated in the United States and, by most estimates, lasted 1929-1941.

<sup>87</sup> Ingersol, "Nazarenes and the Urban Ethos."

Cottage in Pilot Point, and later, as the founder of a home for unwed mothers in Bethany, Oklahoma, she boarded a train for Little Rock. There she confronted the matron of a brothel and took one of the young women back to the Nazarene home in Bethany to be cared for and rehabilitated. Ingersol indicates this incident was paradigmatic of the changing mindset of the rural holiness tradition regarding social reform in the cities. “Her solution for the victims of urban decay was straightforward; it was *a strategy of extraction*.”<sup>89</sup> While this was a noble, and courageous, act of compassion on Mrs. Jernigan’s part, there appeared to be no interest in or attempt to address the social and cultural values that at some level created a market for prostitution, nor to confront or reform the civil and political systems that abetted or kept women from working as prostitutes. It was a strategy to remove a person from the environment of sin, but not to change the environment itself. By the 1920s-40s, Nazarenes had moved “away from a Wesleyan social activism of its pioneers and instead wedded the holiness message to personal standards.”<sup>90</sup>

### **Reversing the Great Reversal**

The Great Reversal is a part of Nazarene history. Its impact on the relationship between the church and the city cannot be ignored or minimized. This section will briefly

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., emphasis added.

<sup>90</sup> Ronald R. Emptage, “Denominational Identity in Historical Perspective” (paper presented to Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, 1989).

suggest strategic direction and recommendations for the Church of the Nazarene's ongoing ministry in the urban context to reverse the Great Reversal.

### Function Precedes Form

The question of function considers the desired outcomes of church planting; the question of form suggests the creation of systems needed to sustain church planting. The guiding concern for both form and function must always be the unique contribution that the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition can bring to the urban context. Mission trumps models. The Church of the Nazarene must fashion unique approaches to ministry in the city and not be bound by the tyranny of duplicating other models, regardless of their origin or level of success. Knowledge of best practices in urban settings can be helpful, but, as Jim Copple observes, "Because programs and projects are highly contextualized, replications in these environments are doomed to failure."<sup>91</sup> Ministries that are developed should arise from each local context while remaining faithful to Wesleyan-Holiness fundamentals. Urban specialist, Michael Mata, refers to this approach as "exegeting the community."<sup>92</sup>

Because cities are dynamic organisms, ministry methods and strategies must be flexible to make contextual adjustments. Many urban church planting strategies and goals emanate from a church-growth movement perspective, as Michael R. Jones notes, "emphasizing a social science approach in the tradition of Donald McGavern and C. Peter Wagner."<sup>93</sup> The social science strategy is inadequate because urban areas change shape

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<sup>91</sup> Copple, "Re: Nazarene Ministry in Urban Contexts."

<sup>92</sup> Michael Mata, "Organizational Leadership in Urban Contexts," (seminar, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, July 13-17, 2015).

and form depending on the transient population living there at any given time. The concept of a toolbox may be a better approach.

Employing a toolbox metaphor, seasoned urban pastor, David Best, has designed “Essentials Tools for Effective Urban Ministry.”<sup>94</sup> His recommended tools are organized into three categories, with their component parts: knowledge—Scripture, classic theology, biblical foundations of urban mission, evangelism, urban spirituality, and corporate spiritual formation; skills—exegeting the city to understand its history, social, economic, and political systems, community organizing, reading culture, intercultural diversity, and organizational development/management skills related to nonprofits, boards, building issues, and finances; attitudes—open to diversity, cooperation, collaboration, solidarity with the poor (referring to an incarnational attitude—ministering with presence, not paternalism), and patience.<sup>95</sup>

In 1996, Multicultural Ministries for the Church of the Nazarene convened a meeting of urban missional practitioners. The committee developed core competencies necessary for anyone involved in Nazarene urban church planting. Even though the core competencies were advanced more than twenty years ago, they continue to highlight the qualities needed from urban ministry leaders: an ability to analyze social, economic, and

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<sup>93</sup> Michael R. Jones, “Book Review: *The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God* by Conn and Ortiz,” Michael Jones Blog, entry posted April 24, 2012, <https://michaeltjones.wordpress.com/2012/04/24/book-review-urban-ministry-the-kingdom-the-city-the-people-of-god-by-conn-ortiz/> (accessed July 18, 2017).

<sup>94</sup> David M. Best, *Successfully Serving the City* audio book (Nashville, TN: Towel and Basin and Highley Music Company, 1997).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

political systems, and to organize appropriate ministry responses; an ability to develop organizational and financial strategies to create and sustain ministry opportunities; an ability to analyze and organize a congregation/community for holistic and community-based evangelism; an understanding of culture, ethnicity, religion, and gender within the urban context; an ability to develop strategies for working with diverse cultural groups and developing multicultural ministries and leadership; a clear understanding of biblical and theological themes and paradigms that inform and shape ministry in the city; a clear understanding of the development of personal leadership skills and spiritual formation.<sup>96</sup>

Although cities are in a constant state of flux, urban pastors must be adaptable and prepared to stay for the long-term. “The non-negotiables for such preparation are that it is in *context*, offering relevant *content* and producing the *competencies* that can be measurably demonstrated.”<sup>97</sup> Such preparation will require more than new structures. As Best advocates, “[It] will require new ways of thinking from what most Nazarenes have come to believe about church.”<sup>98</sup>

### Ecclesial Leadership and Denominational Culture

A denominational urban strategy for the future must be a shared vision. A top-down and disconnected strategy from the grassroots of those actually involved in frontline ministry will be counterproductive. Leadership can describe the need and opportunities for ministry in urban centers, but must also be willing to learn from best

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<sup>96</sup> Best, “The Urban Imperative,” 81.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 82, emphasis in original.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

practices of the practitioners and provide the structures through which people are given an opportunity to serve. Among the indispensable partners for church development in the Church of the Nazarene are district superintendents. District superintendents are the missional and administrative overseers who serve a geographic grouping of churches.

Tom Nees comments:

In the Nazarene connectional structure, (in the United States and Canada at least), nothing gets traction for church development without the support of district superintendents. I think district superintendents serving in urban areas would welcome the opportunity to engage in collaborative strategic planning. They will likely welcome the opportunity to develop and implement a visionary and workable strategy.<sup>99</sup>

Former professor and current CEO of National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, Jesse Miranda, suggests that there are certain characteristics and qualities in district superintendents that are critical for urban leadership development and church planting: “Affirm pastors where they are with the gifts they have; recognize that growth in urban contexts takes time; [urban] church planting is not like a factory, but a garden; sometimes be operative in leadership style—doing something to get it done—but often, [the leadership style] needs to function cooperatively; utilize splits and divisions [of churches] with [the] surgical precision of separating Siamese twins to begin new works; plan ahead—view differences as possibilities; [cultivate an] attitude and skill that can convert a problem into potential.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Nees, “Re: Nazarene Work in Urban Contexts.”

<sup>100</sup> Jesse Miranda, “Interview with David Best,” cited in Best, “The Urban Imperative,” 79.



Even as district superintendents must share an urban vision, so frontline urban mission entrepreneurs need to be encouraged, recognized, and supported. Networks for urban ministry practitioners should be promoted and nurtured. It is possible that the urban ministry of the future will emerge from loyal mavericks who function best outside the box of institutional expectations and control. If the Church of the Nazarene desires a vital future in the urban context, its district leadership must inspire, embrace, and incarnate the vision.

Leadership development also is critical for the sustainability of urban church planting. Nazarene universities and seminaries could develop courses that focus on the city, including excursions into city life and community mapping exercises. “[T]raining urban leaders is done best in the city. . . . Context always affects the content, interpretation, and application of what we are learning.”<sup>101</sup> This kind of immersion into the richness of the urban context would affirm the diversity in demographics and ethnic cultures. Leadership development in urban areas would include support for ministerial preparation among ethnic minorities. Denominational resources could also be distributed to support the development of immigrant ministries, particularly Spanish-speaking.

### The Necessity of Ecumenical Partnerships

To make a significant impact on any great metropolitan area will require intentional cooperation with other churches, denominations, and other cultural institutions, i.e., community development partners. Tim Keller submits, “No one kind of

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<sup>101</sup> Best, “The Urban Imperative,” 79.

church—no one church model or theological tradition—can reach an entire city.”<sup>102</sup>

Wesley’s emphasis on a catholic spirit recognizes that other theological traditions have important perspectives to teach the Church of the Nazarene and offer multiple ways to benefit a shared mission.

While denominational distinctions are multi-faceted, much can be gained from working together. “As much as we want to believe that most people will want to become our particular kind of Christian, it is not true. The city will not be won unless many different denominations become dynamic mini-movements.”<sup>103</sup> Whereas a local church can change a neighborhood, only a unified movement can change an entire city. For this reason, Tim Keller maintains that to make a real difference in a city, one church for every thousand people would be the tipping point to do more than maintain, but grow the body of Christ.<sup>104</sup> “The relationship of the number of churches to churchgoing people is exponential, not linear.”<sup>105</sup>

A good deal can be learned from the success of sister denominations. The Church of God Anderson’s ministry within African-American communities, the Wesleyan Church’s positive influence in helping change unjust immigration policies, and the Catholic Church’s success in establishing community development centers are all notable. Church executives could consider the possibility for denominations to combine

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<sup>102</sup> Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 368.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 369.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 362-365.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 362.

their strengths and weaknesses to produce something sustainable in vast urban areas. The Salvation Army is recognized globally for their effectiveness in urban compassionate ministries. However, their local churches have not been strong historically. The Church of the Nazarene and the Salvation Army could work together, potentially, in establishing dynamic works that include the best of both traditions.

With exorbitant real estate costs in urban areas, facilities could be shared as a matter of stewardship. Interdenominational co-pastorates could be considered. Synergy is created when a kingdom mindset prevails over who receives the credit. An experimental beta project in one city could prove to be invaluable for future urban strategies. This is a potential strategic step to move from linear to exponential, incremental to movement. Ministry in the urban context welcomes ecumenical partnerships. Addressing diversity requires innovative approaches and integrated cooperation. The catholic spirit of Wesley, and of those who are his offspring, makes these partnerships not only possible, but imperative.

## CHAPTER 5

### EXPLORING THE PARISH CHURCH MODEL FOR URBAN CHURCH PLANTING

The Bible offers no specific directions for church planting. The apostle Paul planted churches, but beyond where, when, and why, we know very little about how. Jesus spoke more about the kingdom of God than he ever said about the church. Leonard Hjalmarson surmises that the language of church planting, and the various aspects associated with it, was part of Constantine's legacy, and that viewed through a Christendom lens, "the boundaries between Church and kingdom were blurred."<sup>1</sup> Hjalmarson further maintains that the limitations imposed by the residue of Enlightenment thinking are "fading away in favor of the *missio Dei*."<sup>2</sup>

#### **Current Manifestations of the Church of the Nazarene in the Urban Context**

The Church of the Nazarene in the United States currently has three basic manifestations of city churches located in the urban cores: established, immigrant, and compassionate ministries-based. Each of these church types has strengths and

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard Hjalmarson, "Post-Christendom and Adaptive Challenge," in *Text and Context: Church Planting in Canada in Post-Christendom*, ed. Leonard Hjalmarson (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2013), Kindle Location 207.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

weaknesses, and function best when they work interdependently with each other. These three manifestations will be explored and a possible fourth expression, the parish church model, will be considered as a viable alternative for Wesleyan-Holiness church planting in the urban context.

### Established Churches

Established churches have facilities and membership, both of which are either declining or being renewed. Tim Keller, founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan and of City to City, a training and networking organization designed to create gospel movements in cities through church planting, believes that one way to renew existing churches is by planting new ones. He suggests four reasons why planting many new churches brings renewal to established churches. First, “new churches bring new ideas to the whole body of Christ.”<sup>3</sup> Because they have the intrinsic freedom to be innovative, new churches become the potential Research and Development Department for every church in the city.<sup>4</sup> Second, “new churches raise up new, creative Christian leaders for the whole city.”<sup>5</sup> While older established congregations may promote stability and tradition, new congregations value creativity and risk, thereby attracting those who have the aptitudes and gifts for innovation.<sup>6</sup> These new churches become appealing to the creative artisan class who have come to the city for the same

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<sup>3</sup> Keller, *Center Church*, 360.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

reasons. Third, “new churches challenge other churches to self-examination.”<sup>7</sup> Often it is only in the fruitfulness of new expressions that an established church is forced to consider what is no longer working and the potential value of new wineskins. As demonstrated by Phyllis Tickle and others, this self-examination does not diminish the mother church, but strengthens it to imagine a new and better future.<sup>8</sup> Finally, “new churches can be an evangelistic feeder system for a whole community.”<sup>9</sup> New life propagates more new life. Witnessing life transformation at any level strengthens the whole church. The byproduct is that new churches in a city generally bring new people to existing churches. In summary, “vigorous church planting is one of the best ways to renew the existing churches of a city, as well as the single best way to grow the whole body of Christ in a city.”<sup>10</sup>

Established churches that have not moved out of the urban core have property and facilities in prime locations. In many instances, precipitously rising costs have made these gentrified areas unaffordable real estate for new congregations. Sharing these facilities with newly birthed congregations can become a means of grace to both the mother church and the newborn church without threatening the viability of either. Established churches

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 360-361.

<sup>8</sup> Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 17. Referring to the inevitable cultural changes that are occurring in the church, Tickle roots cultural upheaval in historical aspects of Christianity that have demonstrated how new expressions of faith do not destroy the existing church, but make it stronger and better. “[T]he organized expression of Christianity which up until then had been the dominant one is reconstituted into a more pure and less ossified expression of its former self.

<sup>9</sup> Keller, *Center Church*, 361.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

also have material and human resources that new church plants may not possess.

Christian stewardship demands sharing what has been given by grace with a view for the kingdom of God and without fear of loss—temporally or eternally. A hoarding mindset of holding on to what one has, for fear that there will never be enough to go around, is both erroneous and anti-kingdom. Generous, established churches have found the opposite to be true—by giving away from themselves they have discovered renewed body life in their own congregations. Moreover, members of established churches often are underutilized and unchallenged in their current congregational setting, and would relish the opportunity to use their previously inhibited passions and gifts for kingdom service.

### Immigrant Churches

Immigrants are some of the most responsive groups in the United States to church planting and evangelistic efforts. Many arrive with deep religious commitments while others have no church affiliation and are open to the gospel message. Immigrants are often the most overlooked people group in urban settings, yet may offer the greatest potential for church growth in the United States. The term, diaspora, refers to displaced people who have migrated, either freely or by force, from their homeland to another place, often arriving first in large cities. They come with physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, often feeling vulnerable, disoriented, and in culture shock. “Their lives have been turned upside-down. They need lots of help, especially in the first months and

years. If Christians step up to assist them, their hearts can be wide open for the gospel.”<sup>11</sup> Helping someone with great personal need can be perceived as exploitation, or as loving one’s neighbor as oneself.

Timothy Smith refers to the act of migration as a “theologizing experience,”<sup>12</sup> because those who experience transcultural dislocation from their homeland and former way of life often become aware of God’s prevenient and providential grace in a new way. “[T]heir sense of God’s care for them intensified as individuals tore themselves loose from rural villages that had once nurtured them.”<sup>13</sup> Now they find themselves attempting to acclimate among overwhelming masses in the strange, unfamiliar culture of a new city. Their survival depends on finding work, a place to live, a school for their children, and a community who will embrace them.

Oliver Philips, former Director of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries and Mission Strategy for United States/Canada, believes the recent immigration patterns to the United States are by divine providence, opening doors for mission unparalleled in history.<sup>14</sup> He is not alone in that opinion. Tom Nees writes in *The Changing Face of the*

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<sup>11</sup> Ed Stetzer, “Serving God in Today’s Cities: An Interview with Dean Merrill,” *Christianity Today*, March 24, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/march/serving-god-in-todays-cities.html> (accessed March 22, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Timothy L. Smith, “Internationalization and Ethnicity: Nazarene Problems and Accomplishments” (paper presented to Association of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers, 1987). ANSR Collection, Nazarene Archives, Lenexa, KS.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Oliver Philips, “Who Moved My Church? New Curves to Express Demographic Changes” (Kansas City, MO: International Church of the Nazarene Multicultural Ministries, 2003), 21, <http://www.usacanadaregion.org/sites/usacanadaregion.org/files/WhoMovedMyChurch.pdf> (accessed February 5, 2018).



*Church* that “As a result of immigration and inevitable global population changes, the cities of the United States and Canada have become as foreign as any so-called foreign country to English-speaking white people who make up ninety percent of the members of the Church of the Nazarene in their countries. It is no exaggeration to describe these urban areas as ‘mission fields.’”<sup>15</sup>

Forty percent of San Francisco’s population is foreign-born.<sup>16</sup> Los Angeles has approximately 140 countries represented, speaking more than 200 different languages, with the multicultural distinction of having no majority population.<sup>17</sup> The City of Houston reports more than ninety languages are spoken with ninety-two countries maintaining consular offices (third highest in the nation).<sup>18</sup> Taking these realities into account, and due to the fact that ministry in the city is now inevitably and indefinitely multicultural,<sup>19</sup> the same missiological strategies and training presented to those who serve as international missionaries would benefit those who serve urban areas in the USA.

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<sup>15</sup> Tom Nees, *The Changing Face of the Church: From American to Global* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1997), 84.

<sup>16</sup> “The Top Ten Most Diverse Cities in America,” <https://www.cnn.com/2011/05/17/The-Top-10-Most-Diverse-Cities-in-America.html> (accessed February 5, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> “About Houston: Facts and Figures,” <http://www.houstontx.gov/about/houstonfacts.html> (accessed February 5, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> This fact was demonstrated by Nazarene missiologist, Paul Orjala, in an unpublished paper entitled, “The Urban Missionary,” as part of a Missiologist Committee Report for the Church of the Nazarene, 1996. The concept of an urban missionary was a new way of viewing multicultural ministry in the United States.

Cities presently hold the greatest possibility for fulfilling the Church of the Nazarene's mission, "To make Christlike disciples in the nations." Recognizing rapidly changing demographics, the denomination is attempting to respond to the needs and opportunities presented by migration patterns. "I fear if we [the Church of the Nazarene] continue to do nothing different than we are doing," warns Tom Nees, "in the near future, when and where there is no majority group, this denomination will be marginalized as a predominately English-speaking white fellowship in a sea of diversity."<sup>20</sup> In the first multicultural conference of the Church of the Nazarene, General Superintendent Paul Cunningham, reflected on witnessing his home church in downtown Chicago leave the city and relocate to the suburbs. The tragedy, for Cunningham, was more than the selling of valuable property that the church would likely never be able to recover; it was leaving the people that the church had been birthed to serve. He closed the sermon with a fervent plea to the church: "Someday we're going to get a vision for the cities. It's missionary work in our cities. We'll not save our cities until we get a missionary vision for the cities. We left the cities and then the new America moved to the cities. *The mission field decided to come to us, and it came to stay.*"<sup>21</sup>

### Compassionate Ministries-Based Churches

Compassionate ministries-based churches are the most prevalent Nazarene presence in cities due to the fact that compassion is woven into the ecclesiological fiber

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<sup>20</sup> Tom Nees, "Building an Inclusive Church in a Multicultural Society" (unpublished paper, 1999), quoted in Philips, "Who Moved My Church?," 22.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Cunningham, "There's Room at God's Table for Everyone" (sermon, September 1994), quoted in Best, "The Urban Imperative," 44, emphasis added.

of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Similar to eighteenth-century England and nineteenth-century America, cities are home to large numbers of people struggling with economic, physical, and psychological challenges. Hence, for Wesleyans who characterize Christian holiness as best defined as love for God and neighbor, “all our ministry must be ‘compassionate ministry.’”<sup>22</sup>

Compassionate ministries-based churches are serious about caring for the poor and addressing the reasons for poverty. This involves both compassion and advocacy. Compassion is attending to the symptoms of injustice; advocacy is confronting the causes of injustice. Research indicates that once a driving force of Nazarene church planting strategies in the city, compassionate ministry centers in the urban core are becoming less tied to local church ministries and more likely to be non-profit in orientation.<sup>23</sup> What makes compassionate ministries-based churches different from the many other ministries of mercy in the city is the direct connection of compassionate activity with a local congregation. Even their compassionate advocacy is directly linked to the life of a community of faith. The aforementioned Community of Hope in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles First, Shepherd Community in Indianapolis, and Lower Lights Church of the Nazarene in Columbus are shining examples of this model.

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas Noble, “Why the Church of the Nazarene?” (sermon, J.B. Chapman Chapel, Nazarene Theological Seminary, May 1, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Jones and Houseal, “Urban Cores and the Church of the Nazarene - United States.”

## **Responding to the Millennial Miracle**

The established, immigrant, and compassionate ministries-based Nazarene churches that exist in urban cores are vital and effective. The conclusion of this project is that a new expression is needed for urban church planting in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Currently, a reverse Great Reversal of multiplied thousands are moving back to city centers. Many of them are constituents of the creative class and young adults. An emerging model of church planting is needed to address the extraordinary Millennial migration into urban areas.

In a recent exchange with denominational leaders for the Church of the Nazarene two missional questions were asked, “Where is the church not yet?” and, “Who are the unreached people groups in our global regions?”<sup>24</sup> Speaking from the mission context of United States/Canada, Regional Director Robert Broadbooks responded that the answers to the questions are intertwined. “The church [in the United States/Canada] is not yet in our great cities, and the unreached people group [in the United States/Canada] are those under the age of thirty-five.”<sup>25</sup> In light of the urban history of the Church of the Nazarene, it is clear where the church must return.

Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology is mindful of those on the margins, including immigrants, refugees, and the poor. Included in the marginalized of the city are those of varying sexual orientations, victims of human trafficking, and those recovering from chemical and substance dependency. Though often not considered a marginalized group,

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Broadbooks, conversation with author, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

Millennials are currently one of the most under-churched, unreached groups in Western society. Their sense of marginalization is often marked with less humility and obvious desperation than other groups, but exists nonetheless. When the Church of the Nazarene returns to the city it has the potential of addressing the need for a greater church presence in urban areas and the need to reach young adults.

Millennials are now the largest generation in American history and, due to immigration, are expected to reach more than eighty million by 2036.<sup>26</sup> In 1991, Neil Howe and William Strauss coined the term, Millennials, in their book on the generations of American history.<sup>27</sup> Born between 1982 and 2001, they are the first generation of the new millennium and they are being impacted by a rapidly changing world. American sociologist Robert Wuthnow enumerates seven key trends that are shaping the lives of young adults today: delayed marriage; fewer children and later in life; uncertainties regarding work and concerns about money; rising levels of education; diminished and fewer social relationships; an increased exposure to the forces of globalization; the cultural impact of an information explosion.<sup>28</sup>

As a result of these trends, several sociological behaviors and beliefs among Millennials have been manifested. First, the racial diversity of the Millennial cohort has

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Fry, "Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America's Largest Generation," Pew Research Center, April 25, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/cms/lib/NJ03000372/Centricity/Domain/701/Millennials%20overtake%20Baby%20Boomers%20as%20Americas%20largest%20generation%20Pew%20Research%20Center.pdf> (accessed February 15, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584-2069* (New York: Perennial, HarperCollins, 1991).

<sup>28</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 20-49.

taught them the value of inclusion and acceptance of a range of cultural and ethnic groups, including a variety of social perspectives. “To this generation, differences are to be praised and honored.”<sup>29</sup> This mindset makes Millennials skeptical of any way of thinking that dictates conformity in the midst of diversity or that raises questions of fairness or justice for any select minority of people.

Second, Millennials, are suspicious of organized religion. More than anecdotal analysis, statistics confirm this fact. Adults between the ages of 21 and 45 make up at least 40 percent of the adherents of every major faith tradition in the United States.<sup>30</sup> However, younger adults make up a smaller proportion of the adherents of several faith traditions now than they did a generation ago, including a dramatic decrease in the proportion of evangelicals in their twenties.<sup>31</sup> Further, the category of Americans who claim no religious affiliation has the largest proportion of Millennials by a significant margin, showing a rise from one in eleven to one in five, in the space of a single generation.<sup>32</sup> When asked about the positive impact that churches have in the country, only 55 percent of Millennials responded favorably, an 18 percent point drop from five years previously.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Elisabeth A. Nesbit Sbannato, “Context and Connection: Understanding Generations as Cultures,” *Evangelicals Magazine*, Spring/Summer 2017, 16.

<sup>30</sup> Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 72.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-77, emphasis added.

<sup>33</sup> Hannah Fingerhut, “Millennials’ Views of News Media, Religious Organizations Grow More Negative,” Pew Research Center (January 4, 2016), <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/04/millennials-views-of-news-media-religious-organizations-grow-more-negative/> (accessed February 15, 2018).

Third, Millennials are seeking a firm moral ground in a relativistic and nihilistic culture. Social scientist Robert Putnam has recently written about the “judge not” mentality that is widespread among young adults and what happens to a society that does not hold others to a moral standard.<sup>34</sup> *New York Times* columnist David Brooks contends that when it comes to multiple generations of family breakdown, “[I]t [is] increasingly clear that sympathy is not enough. It [is] not only money and better policy that are missing in these circles, it [is] norms.”<sup>35</sup> These norms, Brooks continues, will require reintroducing “a moral vocabulary,”<sup>36</sup> that is, “basic codes and rules woven into everyday life”<sup>37</sup> that offer an alternative to the “*plague of nonjudgmentalism*, which refuse[s] to assert that one way of behaving [is] better than another.”<sup>38</sup> The church can provide principled boundaries for a generation desperate for meaning.

Fourth, Millennials care deeply about authenticity. They prefer being real over being relevant.<sup>39</sup> The source or origin of things matters to them. “They show their preference for things that are organically grown, locally sourced, sustainable and

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<sup>34</sup> Robert Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (2015), referenced in Elizabeth Prata, “The Plague of Non-Judgmentalism,” The End Time Blog, entry posted March 13, 2015, <https://the-end-time.org/2015/03/the-plague-of-non-judgmentalism.html> (accessed February 16, 2018).

<sup>35</sup> David Brooks, “The Cost of Relativism,” *New York Times*, March 10, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/10/opinion/david-brooks-the-cost-of-relativism.html> (accessed February 16, 2018), emphasis added.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., emphasis in original.

<sup>39</sup> Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2010), 181-202. Lyons employs the phrase, “countercultural, not relevant,” to describe Millennial attributes.

traceable.”<sup>40</sup> The accouterments of the church growth movement such as “fog machines, large personalities, and performance driven productions are not attractive”<sup>41</sup> to young adults who yearn for simplicity and honesty. On the contrary, Millennials who express interest in the church are “drawn to the anchors of the historic faith.”<sup>42</sup> They gravitate toward “ritual, sacraments, and the purity of spiritual disciplines, and are attracted to [an] authentic relationship with God,”<sup>43</sup> and desire to expose their children to the same.

Fifth, Millennials are accustomed to rapid and continuous change. With the rise of the Internet, this is also the first generation to have nearly unlimited access to information. They have grown to accept and expect constant motion and continuous change. This mandates that the church emphasize a consistent path of discipleship that goes beyond simple conversion, and that any focus on spiritual formation must first be based on authentic relationships. In this respect, Elisabeth Sbanotto advises, “Millennials remind the Church that the gospel is about relationship, restoration, unity, and any attempts at evangelism and discipleship must begin with these things. They challenge hypocrisy and value expressions of faith that are messy, in process, and include the opportunity to express deep doubt.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Nina Schmidgall, “Building Faith: Reaching the Next Generation of Families,” *Evangelicals Magazine*, Spring/Summer 2017, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Sbanotto, “Context and Connection,” 17.



Sixth, and closely related to the previous point, Millennials desire intergenerational connections. Many young adults raised in a church environment were separated from the older generations for programming and worship. They were provided with children's pastors and youth pastors with age-appropriate events. Only on rare occasions were they given the opportunity to mix with seasoned and saintly older adults, depriving them of the chance to "see faith displayed across generations."<sup>45</sup> The research of Fuller Youth Institute reveals that young people who have shared intergenerational experiences with other people of faith tend to have higher levels of spiritual maturity themselves.<sup>46</sup> Accountability and mentoring are highly valued among Millennials.

Thousands of young adults are moving into revived, often gentrified, urban center neighborhoods. They have been called the "new urban intelligentsia"<sup>47</sup> and remain the "single most unchurched demographic in America today."<sup>48</sup> Their being located where the church is not yet expresses the critical nature of urban church planting today.

### **Missional Communities**

A shift is taking place between the Christendom-based approach of the attractional church (invitation-based, corporate gathering) and the post-Christendom

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<sup>45</sup> Schmidgall, "Building Faith," 19.

<sup>46</sup> See Kara Powell and Chap Clark, *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016).

<sup>47</sup> Ron Benefiel quote in Best, "The Urban Imperative," 50.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

approach of the incarnational church (culturally based, corporate sending).<sup>49</sup> The established/inherited approach is focused on attractional church methodologies (Friend Day, Christmas pageants, inviting neighbors to attend a service) while the incarnational approach is focused on more existential and incarnational methodologies (coffee shop ministry, smaller gatherings, neighborhood home groups). The problem with this dichotomy is that it projects an either/or mentality while, in reality, all churches should recognize the need for both. The best of the attractional mode combined with the best of the incarnational mode are missional communities of faith. Missional communities stand at the intersection between the attractional and incarnational expressions. Hjalmarson points out, if missional communities are true to their intended purpose they do gather and are attractive.<sup>50</sup>

Missional communities are welcoming and engaging, inviting and sending, converging and dispersing. “Missional communities exist in the same rhythm that exists in the life of the Trinity: inward in love, outward in mission. The overflowing love of life in community results in mission.”<sup>51</sup> A renewed expression of church planting is needed to demonstrate the best of missional community in the context of urban neighborhoods.

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<sup>49</sup> Uri Scaramanga and Andy Rowell, “Missional vs. Attractional: Debating the Data,” *Christianity Today*, December 2008, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2008/december-online-only/missional-vs-attractional-debating-data.html> (accessed March 2, 2018).

<sup>50</sup> Hjalmarson, “Post-Christendom and Adaptive Challenge,” Kindle Location 250.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

## **The Parish Church Model**

This new expression of missional communities that is faithful to the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition is the parish church model, or churches connected to a place and a people by walkable geography and relational networks. The parish is a geographical space in which a church operates. When Wesley said, “I look upon all the world as my parish,”<sup>52</sup> he did not mean the world is my church; he meant, the whole world is the geographical space in which I willingly share the transforming grace of God. It is unlikely that Wesley believed he would travel the world and preach the gospel. Rather, this was Wesley’s way of saying that the gospel never should be relegated to a particular church or confined to a building. It was a missional statement from Wesley that affirmed his idea of the church being a sent people. Henry Knight and Doug Powe suggest, “‘The world is my parish’ is a claim that frees the gospel from the walls of the physical church.”<sup>53</sup>

The evangelical mindset has often extracted Christians from the host culture into the safety zone of the local church. This strategy serves the dual purpose of protecting from the potential dangers of a secular lifestyle and of maintaining the programs and infrastructure of the church. While there are occasional forays back into the culture for evangelistic opportunities and service, the idea is to extract other people from the host culture and bring them into the safety zone of the church as quickly as possible. The unintended result of this way of thinking is the disengagement of Christians from the

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<sup>52</sup> Wesley, *Journal* (June 11, 1739), *Works* (Jackson), 19:67.

<sup>53</sup> Knight and Powe, *Transforming Community*, Kindle Location 522.

neighborhoods where they live and work, and even worse, a distancing from their non-Christian neighbors.

A parish church model rejects the mindset of extraction and embraces the way of incarnational lifestyles. Just as Jesus became incarnate as “the Word [made] flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood” (Jn 1:14),<sup>54</sup> so a parish church is about moving into and staying in a neighborhood. Incarnational church planting is more than a sending—it is an indwelling. It is more than a going to—it is a living among.

While reaching an entire city for Christ is a worthy goal, a Wesleyan-Holiness approach considers localities. Instead of thinking more generally of church planting in a metropolis, a Wesleyan-Holiness model will begin to focus on planting churches in neighborhoods. Cities are a complex of neighborhoods which require careful exegesis and contextualization. What might be effective in one part of a city may be ineffective in another area. A Wesleyan-Holiness approach might plant a neighborhood church in Midtown, rather than greater Oklahoma City, or the Market District, rather than greater Kansas City, or the high-rise apartments on 5th Avenue and Pine Street. This repositions the church as somewhere that one lives rather than somewhere one goes.

In her book, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, Diana Butler Bass encourages the recovery of the practice of place through a village parish. She describes the historical practice of the parish as a local church serving its immediate community.<sup>55</sup> The pastor,

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<sup>54</sup> Eugene Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing, 2002).

<sup>55</sup> Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church Is Transforming the Faith* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006), 38.

along with the laypeople of the parish, were intimately connected with the life of the village, positioned as a centering point of hospitality and charity.<sup>56</sup> Focusing on geographical community in an intensive way is more decentralized than the more common model of established centralized churches.

The advantages of the parish church concept in the urban context are plentiful. Smaller communities in close proximity often enable its members to connect with each other in a more intimate fellowship of sharing life together through the week rather than Sunday alone. The problem of identifying large meeting spaces that provide for parking is also minimized when the group does not require venues that can host a crowd and members can walk to gathering points. The parish church model allows each group to “think contextually and uniquely about service, ministry, and evangelism in their respective neighborhoods.”<sup>57</sup> When people give, serve, and invest in their local neighborhood context, it can heighten their level of commitment and strengthen the bond between the parishioners and their neighbors. This allows for incarnational ministry, “because it maximizes the knowledge about a neighborhood that the people who live there will have.”<sup>58</sup>

The parish church model of church planting opts for a geographically-based, rather than a demographically-based, focus. It will not ignore specific groups that require particular concentration, but its focus will be on the broader heterogeneity of the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> V3 Movement, “Three Ways the Parish Model Would Change Your Church,” May 18, 2017, <http://www.thev3movement.org/2017/05/3-ways-parish-model-change-church/> (accessed March 3, 2018).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

neighborhood as a whole. While the homogeneity of demographics may enable more rapid numerical growth, it also has a downside. “It has the effect of making the church a subset of secular society rather than a manifestation on earth of the kingdom of Christ.”<sup>59</sup>

Because this model is based on the conviction that each local parish has spiritual responsibility for a specific geographic area, proximity, permanence, and interdependence are crucial to attain neighborhood transformation.<sup>60</sup> Reflecting on the idea of recapturing the parish church model, Leonard Hjalmarson offers an alternative to extraction and an invitation to incarnation:

The parish does not exist in the dualistic, insulated, and protective mode common to Western evangelical churches: it makes the concerns of the [neighborhood] its own concerns. Neither does it exist in the individualistic conversion mode of the typical evangelistic church: its goal is less the conversion of individuals, although this is a good thing, and more the transformation of the [neighborhood].<sup>61</sup>

Based on the assumption that a local congregation is invested in and cares for the community in which it exists, the Awaken Parish Network refers to the incarnational presence in local neighborhoods as, “retelling the story of Jesus, practicing the way of Jesus, and announcing the way of Jesus.”<sup>62</sup> The serving aspect of the Awaken parish model is based on two important questions, followed by a purpose statement of “What if the church saw itself engaged in a loving relationship with its neighborhood? What would

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<sup>59</sup> Edmond P. Clowney, *Living in Christ's Church* (1986), quoted in Keller, *Center Church*, 369.

<sup>60</sup> Awaken Parish Network, “Awaken Community Summary,” [http://www.s3amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/3b/3b95d674-e88e-4257-9132-c8bb209feb38/documents/Parish\\_Model\\_Church\\_Planting.pdf](http://www.s3amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/3b/3b95d674-e88e-4257-9132-c8bb209feb38/documents/Parish_Model_Church_Planting.pdf) (accessed March 3, 2018).

<sup>61</sup> Hjalmarson, “Post-Christendom and Adaptive Challenge,” Kindle Location 293.

<sup>62</sup> Awaken Parish Network, “Vision: Gather, Serve, Community,” [https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/3b/3b95d674-e88e-4257-9132-c8bb209feb38/documents/Parish\\_Model\\_Church\\_Planting.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/3b/3b95d674-e88e-4257-9132-c8bb209feb38/documents/Parish_Model_Church_Planting.pdf) (accessed March 3, 2018).

it look like for the church to ‘romance’ the city it worshipped in? To this end, each congregation will seek to discern the ways in which God is active in its community, and then attempt to partner and get involved.”<sup>63</sup>

Incarnational, geography-based ministry maintains that place really matters. “It’s a way of saying, ‘I believe in the Incarnation.’ Having an earthy eschatology is part of it.”<sup>64</sup> Urban parish pastor, Ray Cannata, maintains that loving our neighbors begins where they live. “The parish church seeks to be a part of God’s answer for the neighborhood. That means that we raise the bar on involvement. We ask members to be very engaged in ministry. We ask, ‘Are you willing to make a neighborhood’s issues your issues by being salt and light here?’”<sup>65</sup> The greatest impact of being salt and light in an urban space requires a community of faith working together. The parish church model is a viable way for the body of Christ to move into a neighborhood.

### **Parish Church Model: Midtown Church of the Nazarene**

One Nazarene congregation that has adopted the urban parish church model is the Midtown Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Midtown was launched as a church plant in November 2015, but the dream for it was being envisioned several years prior. Recognizing that the Midtown/Downtown area of Oklahoma City lacked an evangelical

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Melissa Kelley, “Redefining the Parish Model: An Old Concept Finds Revival Within the PC,” *By Faith: The Online Magazine of the Presbyterian Church in America*, June 1, 2012, <http://www.byfaithonline.com/redefining-the-parish-model-an-old-concept-finds-revival-within-the-pca/> (accessed March 3, 2018).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

presence and, more specifically, a Wesleyan-Holiness presence, Pastors Chris Pollock and Michael LaVigne began to dream of planting a church in the heart of Oklahoma City.

After many years of neglect, the Oklahoma City downtown was being revitalized and returning to be the epicenter of commerce, economics, entertainment, art, music, and residential living.<sup>66</sup> In 2013, there were approximately forty Nazarene churches in the surrounding Oklahoma City metropolitan area that comprised two different districts, Oklahoma District Church of the Nazarene and Southwest Oklahoma District Church of the Nazarene.<sup>67</sup> Yet, in the downtown area with the highest population, there were only five Nazarene congregations. One of those congregations exceeded eighty in morning worship attendance; the other four averaged less than forty in weekly worship attendance.<sup>68</sup>

Recognizing the need for a new expression, Pollock began to develop a plan of action for an urban church plant that was presented to the potential mother church. His prospectus highlighted three general reasons why dynamic new churches are necessary: (1) new churches best reach the lost and unchurched, (2) new churches best reach new generations and new people groups, and (3) new urban churches best follow the New Testament pattern and the pattern set in the Church of the Nazarene.<sup>69</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>66</sup> Chris Pollock, "Oklahoma City Church Plant Prospectus: A Proposal to the Bethany First Church of the Nazarene Church Board," October 2013, (accessed from author November 2015).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Pollock, "Oklahoma City Church Plant Prospectus," 4-5.



Pollock proposed four context-specific reasons why this church plant was necessary: (1) the vocational call of the Church of the Nazarene is to strategically move towards unreached people groups, (2) it is important to reflect and remain faithful to our heritage, (3) Oklahoma City exerts influence in the wider culture, and (4) there is a spiritual indifference to the gospel and young adults are a generation in crisis.<sup>70</sup>

The young adult question, for Pollock, revolved around the fact that “younger adults have always been disproportionately found in newer congregations” and that “[e]merging adulthood is a time of exploration and generally speaking, during this time in life, commitments are temporary.”<sup>71</sup>

Many lack attachments to family members, friends, and personal ideals. It can be assumed then, without these attachments (indications of a lack of social capital), young adults lack a permanent attachment to a faith community or a set of doctrinal beliefs. . . . Even though Christian spirituality is essentially about relationship and connectedness to God through Christ and others by the work of the Holy Spirit, religion is an isolated and personal subject for most young adults.<sup>72</sup>

Pollock and LaVigne began to imagine a story of hope for the midtown/downtown area through a group of people who did not just attend a church, but were committed to being the Church; who not only gathered as the church on Sunday (attractional), but who scattered as the Church throughout the week.<sup>73</sup>

Imagine a church where Monday through Saturday is just as important as Sunday. Imagine a people, engaged in community, working together for the glory of God and the good of our city. Imagine little groups of ordinary people scattered all

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 5-7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 4-6.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 2.

over our city, living missionally in order to bring the light of the gospel in neighborhoods and relational networks—in suburban neighborhoods and big businesses, among artists and mechanics, among medical professionals and international students. Imagine a church that serves as a redeemed community where people find safety, inclusion, healing, and transformation.<sup>74</sup>

The Midtown parish church model began to take shape around the missiological approach to ministry in which a community of faith is established in a certain area of the city and the Jewish/Christian story becomes the ethos of the community.<sup>75</sup> Pollock, who also serves as lead pastor, comments, “As God’s people we are ‘resident aliens’ (outsiders) that have been called to care for a location. This concept is holistic and great efforts need to be made not to be imperialistic.”<sup>76</sup>

As a parish-minded church, Pollock maintains that there are three important tasks that the church must engage in. The first task is to “get to know our neighbors.”<sup>77</sup> Co-founding pastor, Michaele LaVigne, agrees, “We have embraced the idea of a parish—of being people of a place, giving care to a specific place with clear geographic boundaries and the people within them.”<sup>78</sup> This includes, but is not limited to, getting to know other established churches and pastors regardless of their denominational affiliation or language group, other non-Christian and Christian faith communities, the established for-

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. The cultural values adopted by Midtown of church as a safe, inclusive, healing, and transforming place were derived from David A. Busic, “Lions, Lambs, and the New Creation: An Exploration of the Eschatological Vision of Isaiah 11 for the Church.”

<sup>75</sup> Chris Pollock, conversation with author, March 1, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Michaele LaVigne, conversation with author, February 26, 2018.

profit business owners, local law enforcement, hospitals and service oriented organizations, and non-profits.<sup>79</sup>

The second task is to “listen well.”<sup>80</sup> This assumes that in a city there are already ministries and services that have been established, but because of a variety of economic, political, and sociological reasons, those do not have enough resources or people to support the work.<sup>81</sup> “A parish model church looks to be good neighbors by discerning the ‘good (gospel) work’ that others are doing and getting in on it.”<sup>82</sup> According to Pollock, new ministries are not started without considerable listening, discernment, and prayer to allow the parish church to decide on its most appropriate role in the life of the neighborhood.<sup>83</sup>

The third task is to recognize that the “target audience are those that live within walking or bike riding distance from the place of worship.”<sup>84</sup> Pollock explains, “Our space does not serve those who have to drive a long way or live outside our parish. While they are welcome, everything that the church does, such as language, intention, and strategy, is to serve those who live nearby.”<sup>85</sup> The incarnational purpose of being good neighbors is why both Pollock and LaVigne chose to move their families to the

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<sup>79</sup> Pollock, March 1, 2018.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

neighborhood where the church facility is located. LaVigne reiterates this point: “We want to be good and useful neighbors. And we mean neighbors in a very literal sense. We want to know our neighbors, the people who live and work and do life right around us ... And we want them to know us as good neighbors who are helpful, who provide care and resources to our neighbors and neighborhood.”<sup>86</sup> The Wesleyan-Holiness parish model adopted by the Midtown Church is a holistic approach that includes a focus on space, place, and people. In thinking about space, Pollock maintains that the parish model must ask how their property, or worship location, is perceived in the neighborhood. “Does it take up resources for self-serving purposes, such as massive parking craters taking over green space? Does the space tell a sacred but good story? Is the space used as a gift to serve the neighborhood by offering sanctuary and safety?”<sup>87</sup> The questions of place are also important to the identity of the parish church model. Regarding place, Pollock asks penetrating questions:

Does the location of the church, both building and people, offer resources that indirectly make the place where people live and do life, better or worse? Can the people of the missional community imagine their role to be one of redemption? Gentrified neighborhoods bring in money, but are the Christians of that particular context thinking about the services that they can establish so that all people in the neighborhood have a chance economically?<sup>88</sup>

If the parish church cares about its parish neighborhood it will assist people in securing employment. This means starting businesses and training centers as well as offering scholarships and educational opportunities. The questions of people parallel:

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<sup>86</sup> LaVigne, February 26, 2018.

<sup>87</sup> Pollock, March 1, 2018.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

Does the community of faith advocate for justice among their neighbors? Are they involved in local politics? Do they see themselves in light of the greater Christian story so that equal rights are established in the area? Are the young people given a chance because the local schools are supported by the church? Do the people of the congregation speak out on behalf of prejudice?<sup>89</sup>

With this holistic approach to parish ministry, the Midtown Church of the Nazarene began meeting in a shared space hosted by another local church in the downtown area until they were able to find a permanent home. LaVigne states that from the earliest days of the church plant, she and Pollock wanted to focus on several key elements, beginning with seeing an urban building restored.<sup>90</sup> Due to the white flight of the 1970s and 1980s, buildings and neighborhoods in Midtown with rich histories and intricate architecture were left abandoned and in disarray. “Because we recognize that our God is making all things new,” LaVigne explained, “we wanted to participate in this work of making old things new.”<sup>91</sup> Pollock underscored this priority:

Early on in this church project, we started to pray for a home for our church. We wanted something with a story, that could root us in a neighborhood. Our dream is to reimagine what the church can be—we want to be a people of acceptance and belonging . . . we want to build a place to gather, pray, tell stories, share struggles, celebrate together, and serve . . . we call this kind of a place—a church—which is just another way to say, ‘We want to provide a home for those who need it.’<sup>92</sup>

They found a former Methodist church building on Northwest 8<sup>th</sup> Street that had been vacant for several years. Constructed by the First German Methodist Congregation

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> LaVigne, February 26, 2018.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> “8<sup>th</sup> Street Project,” Midtown Church of the Nazarene, <http://midtownchurchokc.org/8th-street-project> (accessed March 9, 2018).

in 1907, it is a 7,500 square foot building built with great care and craftsmanship.<sup>93</sup> A large original oil painting depicting Jesus' walk to Emmaus remains in the church today, along with twenty-two intricate Jacoby stained glass windows.<sup>94</sup> In 2011, St. Anthony Hospital, located adjacent to the church structure, purchased the 8<sup>th</sup> Street Church. Conversations began between St. Anthony and Midtown Church, and it soon became clear that both were interested in restoring the building and creating a neighborhood church. The hospital offered to sell the 8<sup>th</sup> Street Church to Midtown for the same price they had purchased it, despite significant gentrification creating rising costs in the immediate neighborhood. In addition, an ongoing partnership of shared services between the church and the hospital was developed for future connections and support.<sup>95</sup>

The young congregation launched a capital campaign to purchase and restore the facility with the tagline, "Let's Make Something Old, New Again!"<sup>96</sup> LaVigne points out, "Our desire is to give this building as a gift to the city, and for its restoration to be a physical sign of the restoration we want to see in our parish and our city."<sup>97</sup> Each Sunday for months, a congregant shared a prayerfully crafted statement of "My 8<sup>th</sup> Street Dreams" in a worship service. One member, Evan Mosshart, remarked, "It is a wonderful feeling to restore something to its true glory; to resuscitate and rekindle its vitality. But

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<sup>93</sup> "The 8<sup>th</sup> Street Story," Midtown Church of the Nazarene, <http://midtownchurchokc.org/our-story> (accessed March 9, 2018).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> "8<sup>th</sup> Street Project," Midtown Church of the Nazarene.

<sup>97</sup> LaVigne, February 26, 2018.

my dream is for more than the building. I dream of a church where we know the people around us, not just their names, but the stories of their lives.”<sup>98</sup>

A second key element for Pollock and LaVigne was creating connection and community. Connection has to do with real conversations among the members and neighbors that are open, honest, and true to life. “We are committed to having real conversations in order to develop real relationships with one another. We want to give people a place to truly belong, and ways to serve. This can only happen when we are intentional about knowing one another, hearing one another’s stories, and valuing our differences.”<sup>99</sup>

In order to do this, the Midtown church has sought relationships with others who are not like them. LaVigne reiterates, “As a congregation and as individuals, we have developed partnerships and friendships with churches and city leaders who are not like us—those who do not share our same skin color, economic background, language, or even the same theology.”<sup>100</sup> The church has made it a priority to gather monthly for eating, fun, and shared experiences. The vision of Midtown Church includes the statement, “We will foster real relationships by having real conversations with each other through our worship services, parish groups, and *parties*.”<sup>101</sup> The church is looking for every opportunity to foster true connection and relationship.

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<sup>98</sup> “Our 8<sup>th</sup> Street Dreams,” Midtown Church of the Nazarene, <http://midtownchurchokc.org/8th-street-project> (accessed March 10, 2018).

<sup>99</sup> LaVigne, February 26, 2018.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

Another important facet is what Pollock and LaVigne have called “walking the way of Jesus.”<sup>102</sup> LaVigne comments, “Because Jesus provides us with a new way to do life, this is the way we want to walk together. We want to be people of actions, not just words.”<sup>103</sup> These actions include holy practices such as worship, parish groups, and service in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

With regard to worship, Midtown Church has committed to following the Christian seasons, lectionary texts, and ancient creeds to shape their weekend worship services. “This has allowed us to understand the big picture of the story of God we are invited into.”<sup>104</sup> The sacraments are regularly celebrated and openly highlighted as means of grace that are an “outward sign of an inward grace”<sup>105</sup> where “God does something for us we cannot do for ourselves.”<sup>106</sup>

Each week the Eucharist is the culmination of the worship service and is an open table, “which means that everyone that is open to the good work of Jesus is invited to receive the bread and wine at communion”<sup>107</sup> whether they be members of the church or not. Nonalcoholic wine and gluten free bread are served, and clearly advertised as such,

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<sup>101</sup> “About Us,” Midtown Church of the Nazarene, <http://midtownchurchokc.org/new-page> (accessed March 9, 2018), emphasis added.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> LaVigne, February 26, 2018.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> “The Eucharist,” Midtown Church of the Nazarene, <http://midtownchurchokc.org/worship> (accessed March 10, 2018).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.



so that there are no hindrances for those struggling with addictions or dietary restrictions.<sup>108</sup> The worship leader often makes a connection to the denominational history of the Church of the Nazarene by saying, “Historically, our denomination has been rooted in helping people with addictions . . . [like our early fathers and mothers] we want there to be no barriers.”<sup>109</sup>

All of the Midtown worship services are intergenerational, artistic, and purposeful, with special care given to be rooted in Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. The Midtown website offers this welcome about what to expect in their weekly gatherings: “We sing, sometimes we have a choir, we have a sermon, and we gather around the table. Sometimes we sing 300 year old hymns [sic]. Sometimes we sing songs heard on the radio. Sometimes there is a band. Sometimes there is a poetic reading. Sometimes kids read scripture.”<sup>110</sup>

The practice of telling good stories happens each week during Midtown worship. The gathered community proclaims their identity and mission with a responsive reading marked by its clarity and poetry. A designated, and always different worship leader, from a child to a senior adult, will say:

Leader: Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I’m here because \_\_\_\_\_. Please hear and respond to these words today. We gather here to tell the truth: We don’t have our lives together. And on our own we can’t get them together. We confess that we are poor, and we are hungry and thirsty for what we cannot provide ourselves. We need God’s grace . . . and we need each other.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

We gather here to tell the truth: That while we were still sinners, God died in solidarity with us. And now you and I are forgiven, set free, and adopted into a good family. You and I are not alone—we belong to God and to one another. We are God’s people, people who are rich and satisfied, a people of peace, reconciliation, and love.

People: Because Jesus has been the very best neighbor to us, we will be good neighbors to one another.

All: So today we gather here to tell the truth: Our lives are better when we are neighbors.

People: We will help one another in real ways, and we will have real conversations with one another.

Leader: We are not all the same, but we are all ready for transformation.

People: So, let’s do the very real and good work of God . . . together.

Leader: We gather here to tell the truth:

All: We will be a spiritual community of hope and transformation that lives the way of Jesus!<sup>111</sup>

Following this responsive reading, members will share a five-minute testimony of their life story, including how they came to Midtown Church and why they have chosen to make it their community of faith. They will invite the congregation to participate in a good neighbor practice with the following words:

Because we want to be good neighbors, we’re now going to spend time talking to one another. I am an \_\_\_\_\_ (describe yourself: introvert/extrovert/ outgoing person/shy person), so at first I \_\_\_\_\_ (describe how you felt about this practice: I really loved it/I was nervous, etc.).

But since I’ve been doing it for \_\_\_\_\_ (number of months/ years), I have found that it \_\_\_\_\_ (describe what it’s

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<sup>111</sup> Weekly worship bulletin of Midtown Church of the Nazarene, May 2015.

done for you: helps me feel comfortable with new people/learn names/feel more at home here/ really be a good neighbor).

I think it will do this for you too!

So look around and find one person to talk to—a kid or adult, an old friend, or someone you’d like to meet. Please don’t leave our kids out! You have 90 seconds to share the (very) short version of your life story, and then you will have 90 seconds to hear about your neighbor’s life. There will be a countdown on the screen so you know how long you have.<sup>112</sup>

Midtown Church walks the way of Jesus by meeting in parish groups throughout the week. These groups meet in neighborhoods throughout the community and are made up of people who live near one another. LaVigne, who currently serves as Pastor of Spiritual Formation, notes:

Parish groups exist to care for one another, and to work together to care for others as we learn how to walk the way of Jesus together. This is where we as individuals and as a corporate body figure out together how to really do the things we say we want to do: being good and useful neighbors, connecting and finding community with others, being a part of the good work of God that happens all around us.<sup>113</sup>

The concept of individuals “figuring out how to really do the things we want to do” is aligned with the Wesleyan practice of the class meeting. Midtown Church recognizes that accountability to a parish group is a strong motivation for what happens in a person’s life through the week. Holy practices are regular disciplines that spiritually form believers; these practices are sustained by ongoing accountability to people we are responsible for and who are responsible for us.

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<sup>112</sup> LaVigne, Michael, “Re: 8<sup>th</sup> Street Church Info.” Email message to author. March 9, 2018.

<sup>113</sup> LaVigne, February 26, 2018.

The service component of Midtown includes a commitment to serve the people of their immediate parish neighborhood. Many of these neighbors are poor, homeless, and mentally disabled. This commitment to the poor and marginalized is explicitly stressed in their media and marketing communiques. “In its earliest days, our denomination started churches in the urban core and focused on three things: a commitment to cities and the poor, active involvement in social issues, and a doctrine of hope. Our desire is to return back to these essential issues by being a faithful presence in Midtown/Downtown.”<sup>114</sup> Pollock believes that ministry to and with the poor is a means of grace that is necessary for the spiritual formation of the congregation and of their neighborhood parish.

Midtown Church is investigating the development of a non-profit for acquiring commercial real estate.<sup>115</sup> The properties would be places where they can improve the area and work with young entrepreneurs to begin service-oriented for-profit businesses that would both improve the economy of the neighborhood and create jobs within walking distance. Pollock states, “I am coming to believe that for the people in our area, the best way to Jesus is through a job.”<sup>116</sup> The locations of the businesses would become potential new start locations for more churches.<sup>117</sup>

Exposure to the poorest of the city becomes a matter of essential discipleship for urban dwellers in the parish church expression of Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology, and is

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<sup>114</sup> “Our Beliefs,” Midtown Church of the Nazarene, <http://midtownchurchokc.org/our-beliefs> (accessed March 10, 2018).

<sup>115</sup> Chris Pollock, March 1, 2018.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

connected to Midtown's vision for reaching young adults. Even though Midtown's parish is experiencing some characteristics of gentrification, it continues to maintain aspects of an inner-ring neighborhood. Sean Benesh offers a vision for parish church plants in inner-ring neighborhood, "I see Christians and churches embodying a more incarnational presence in the neighborhood, seeking its shalom, and being more organic in their liturgical expression. They [would be] intentionally identifying with the poor and marginalized. These kinds of churches are needed because they reflect the dynamics of their neighborhoods."<sup>118</sup> This is the opposite of moving into gentrified "cool, hip, trendy" neighborhoods, which much of the creative class is wont to do. This is the incarnational way that more deeply displays the *raison d'être* of the Church of the Nazarene and for the vision of Midtown Church. As Carder affirms, these mutually beneficial relationships of the poor with the community of faith may be the saving grace of the parish church model.<sup>119</sup> It can also be a test for the hermeneutic of love. "It is easy to love a city and parts of the city that are beautiful, well-maintained, and safe. When cities are undesirable, dangerous, and wild our love is truly tested."<sup>120</sup>

The Midtown Church of the Nazarene is a stellar example of the parish church model within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. The church is finding a way to take the unique qualities of Wesleyan-Holiness theology and incorporate them into the essential practices of Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology. While one form of the parish church model

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<sup>118</sup> Benesh, *Exegeting the City*, Kindle Location 666.

<sup>119</sup> Carder, "What Difference Does Knowing Wesley Make?," 30.

<sup>120</sup> Sean Benesh, *Metrospiritual*, Kindle Location 3696.

does not require duplication, Midtown Church is an exemplar of faithful and sustainable practices that take missional living and incarnational ministry seriously.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Church of the Nazarene has a history of established, immigrant, and compassionate ministries-based expressions of urban churches. All three of these continue to be needed and will be strengthened by working together. The parish church model has been largely unexplored and untested in the Church of the Nazarene, and will require integration of previous methods with a renewed commitment to a high level of discipleship. A Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology is a natural fit for contextual parish church expressions and can be effective in ministering among the creative class and Millennials through a strong emphasis on compassion, discipleship, and accountability.

The optimism of grace offers a message of hope and belief in genuine, life-changing conversion and real societal transformation. The eschatological vision of Isaiah 11 is both a picture and paradigm of the kingdom of God in the city. The middle way, or *via media*, position allows for the messiness of the city, both methodologically for mission and structurally for church organization. The peaceable kingdom flexibility that is found in the middle way corresponds to the diversity needed for specific neighborhood contexts. Finally, a commitment to Christian community is a value for Wesleyan-Holiness ecclesiology that calls for living in proximity to our closest relationships. The power of accountability is needed for growth in holiness. The dangers of individualism, isolation, and too much independence with too little accountability are great. David Fitch underscores the need for community in guiding lifestyle choices:

We now recognize that the consumerist forces of our post-Christendom . . . cannot be resisted as isolated individuals. An individual alone cannot resist the forces of desire that tell us a five-bedroom house, and two new cars are more important than Mission [sic], the very life we share with the Triune God. Our communities,

therefore, must be places of spiritual formation, of resistance to the forces of distraction, unsatiated desire, and exploitation of those we choose not to know.<sup>121</sup>

The implications for urban church planting in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition are profound. “Congregations may be especially attractive as places to experience ‘community,’ when community is harder to find.”<sup>122</sup> Urban discipleship in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition depends on relationships of integrity, proximity, and intensity. This is a hopeful way forward for renewing urban church planting in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

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<sup>121</sup> David Fitch, “Fifty Years of Church Planting: The Story as I See It,” in *Text and Context: Church Planting in Canada in Post-Christendom*, ed. Leonard Hjalmarson (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2013), Kindle Location 649.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.



## APPENDIX

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;  
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.  
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—  
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and of power,  
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -  
and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.  
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,  
or decide by what he hears with his ears;  
but with righteousness he will judge the needy,  
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.  
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;  
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.  
Righteousness will be his belt  
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.  
The wolf will live with the lamb,  
the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;  
and a little child will lead them.  
The cow will feed with the bear,  
their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.  
The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,  
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.  
They will neither harm nor destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.  
In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations  
will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. (Isaiah 11:1-10)

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